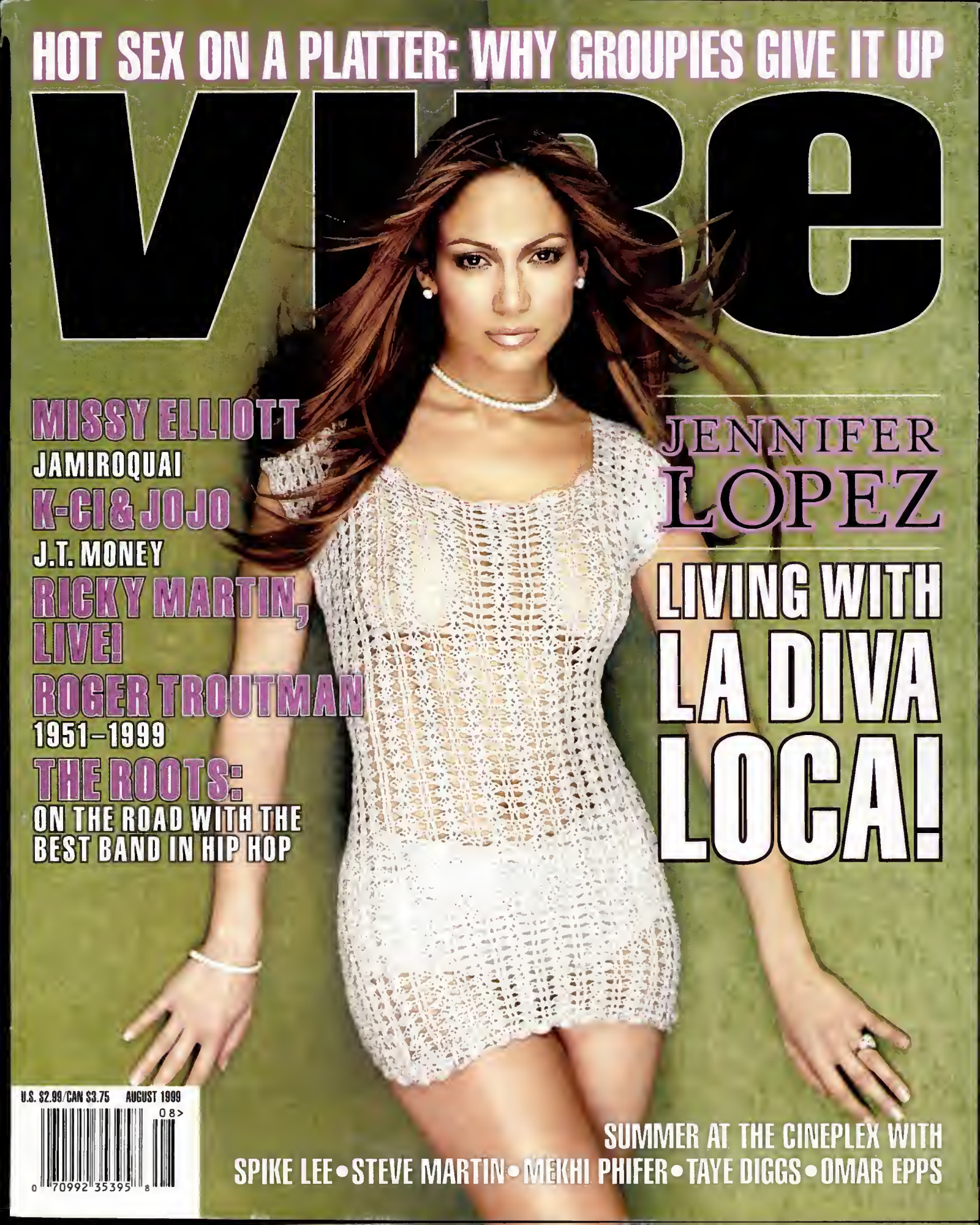




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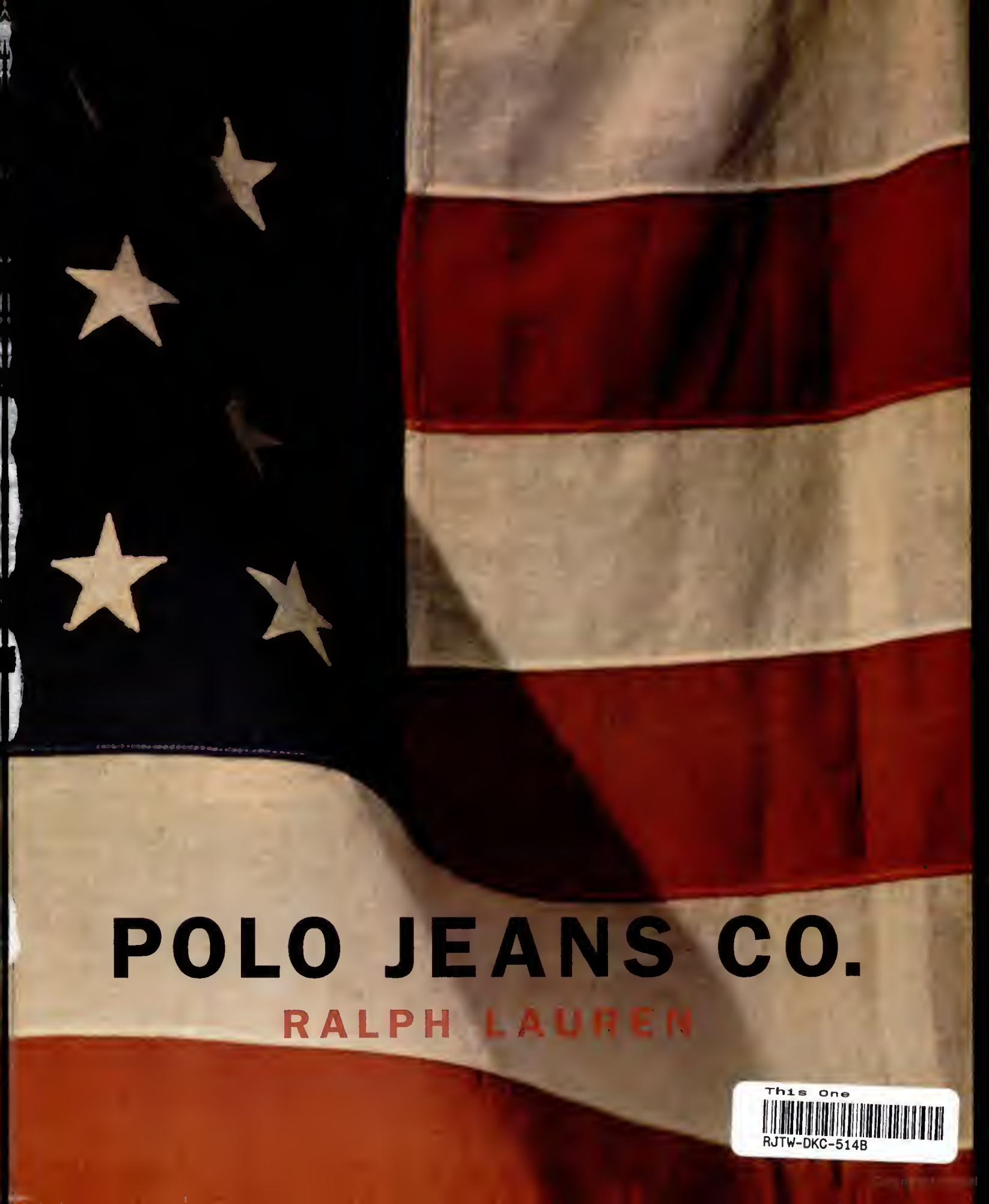
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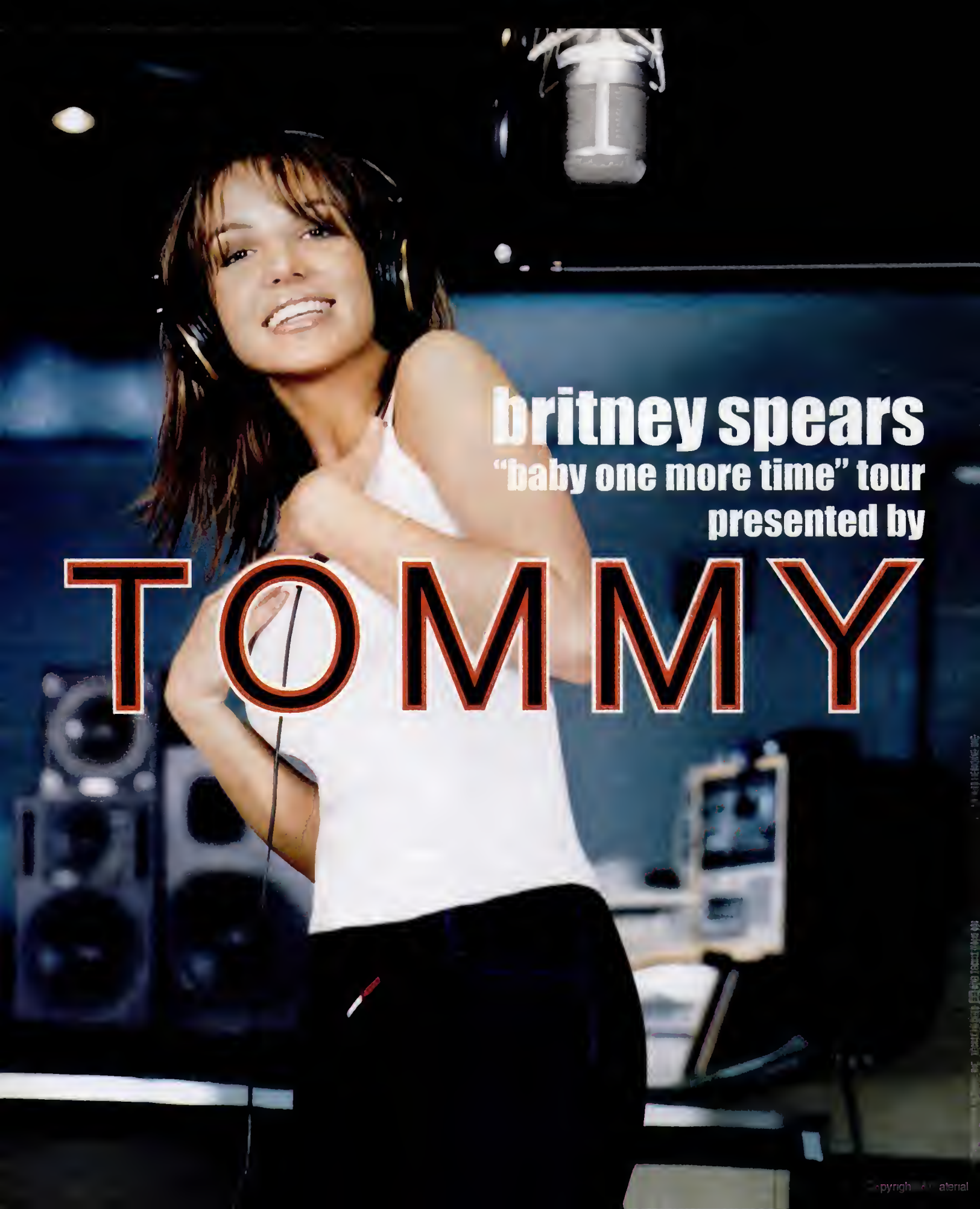


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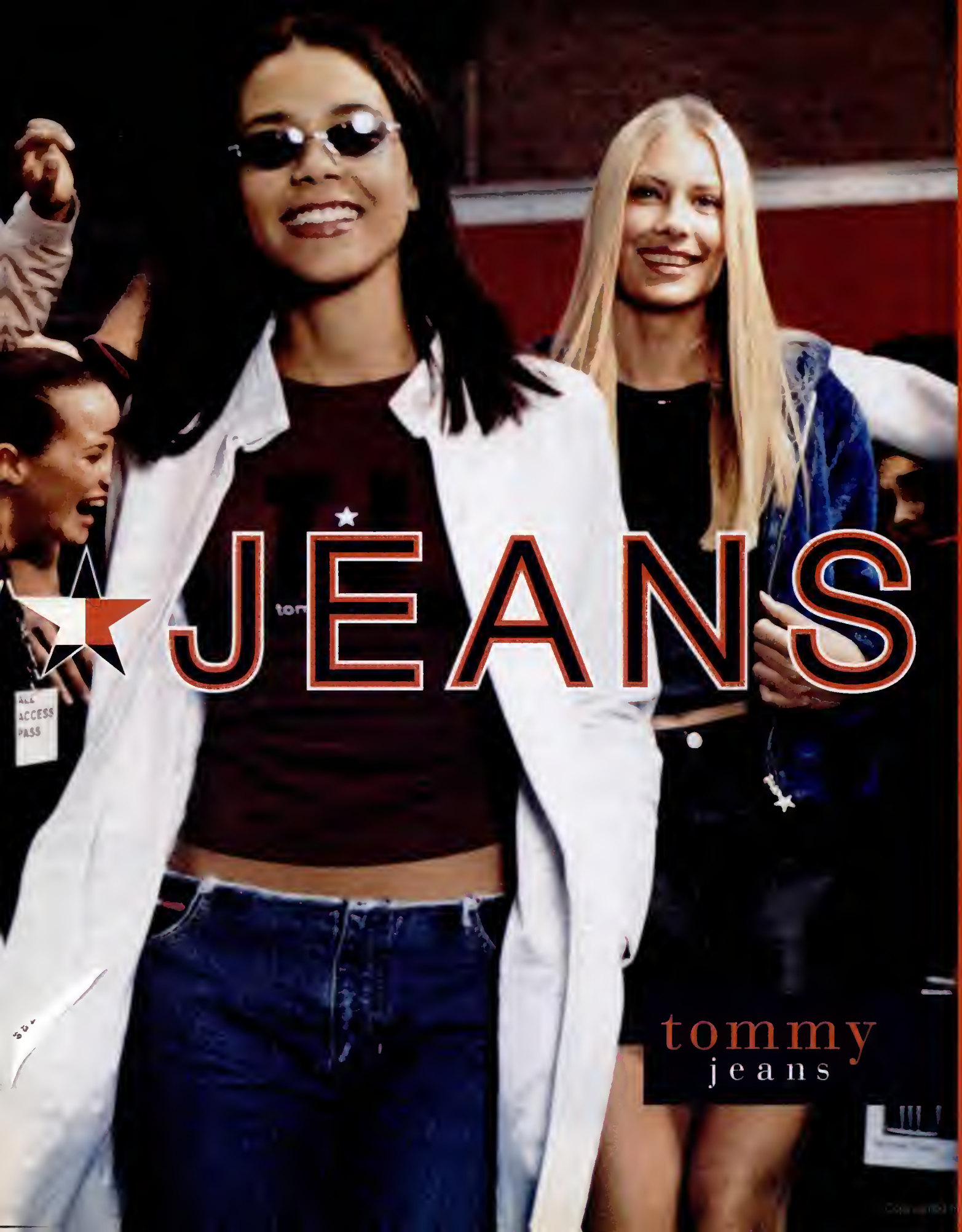
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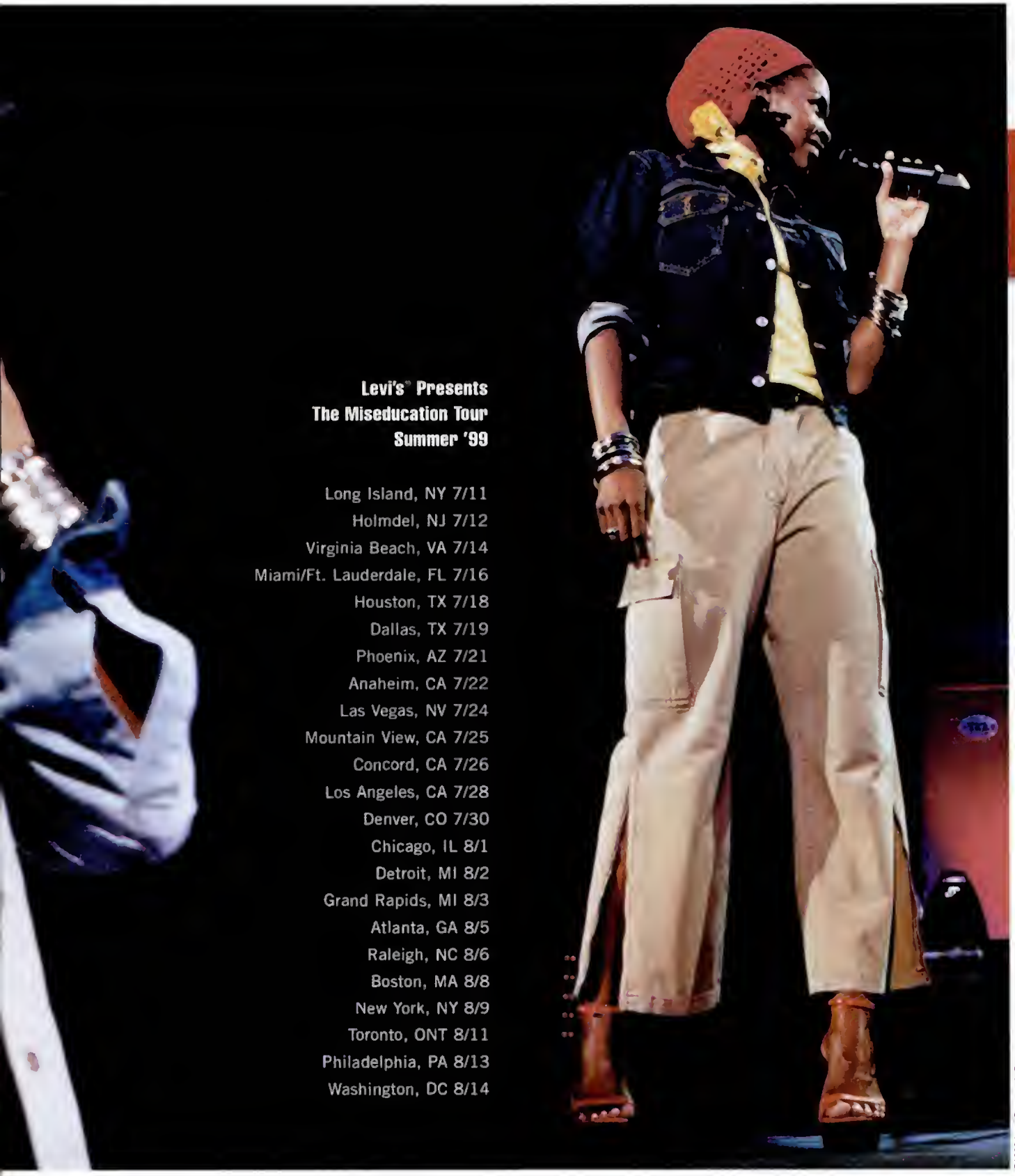

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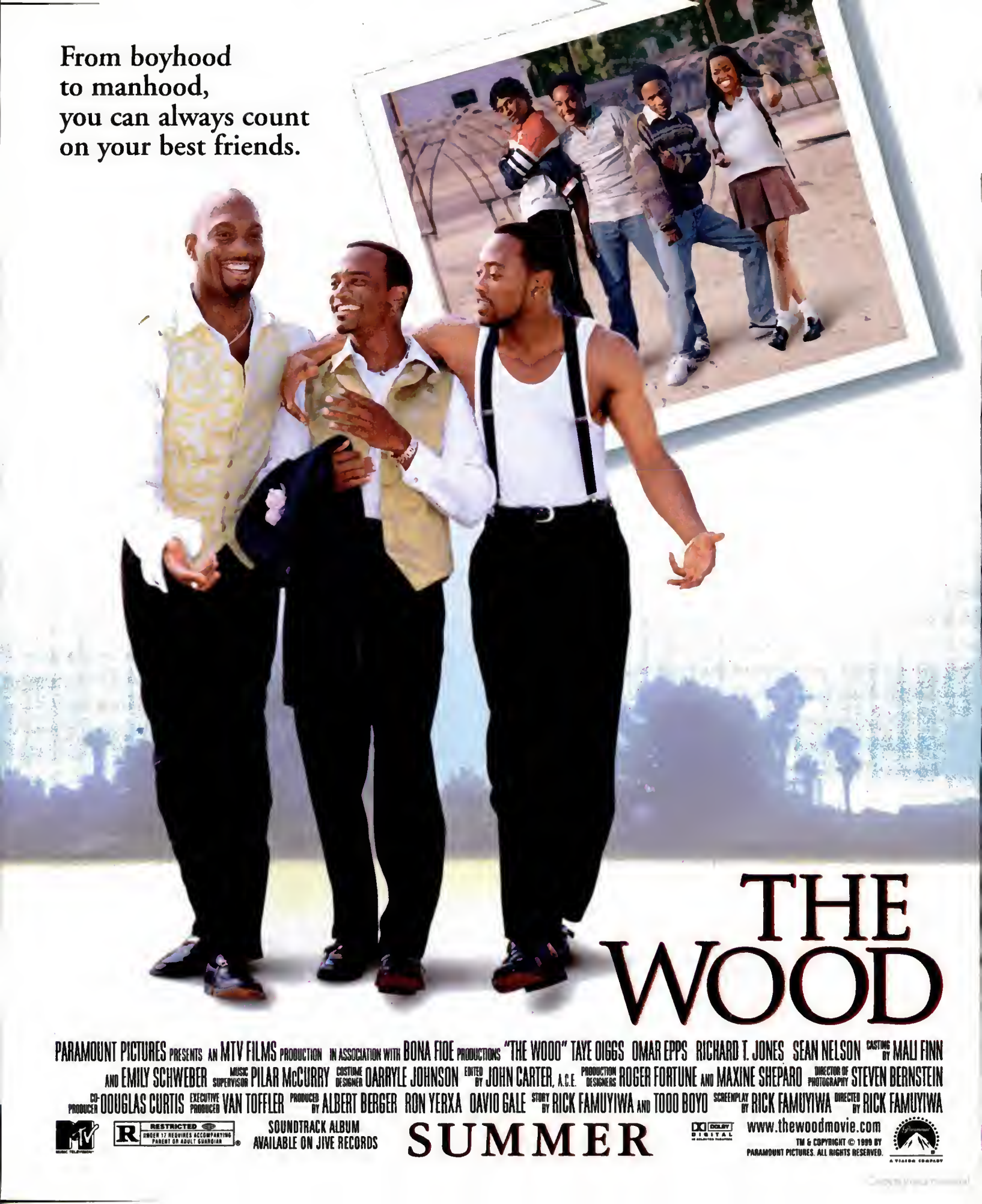


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FEATURES

AUGUST 1999 • VOLUME 7, NUMBER 8

BOOMIN' SYSTEM Screen-scorching siren Jennifer Lopez steps away from the cameras and into the sound booth, proving herself a rump shaker in more ways than one.
By dream hampton.
Photographs by Firooz Zahedi

GROWNASSWOMANPOWER Missy "Misdemeanor" Elliott has more than just the keys to the jeep, she's got three Mercedes, a Jag, a Lex—and her own company. If sitting in the driver's seat makes her a bitch, so be it.
By Marc Weingarten.
Illustration by the Dynamic Duo Studio

JKNY Before he became everybody's favorite funky sensation, Jamiroquai's frontman was a spliff-smoking, skateboarding, troubled young scruff-neck. *James Hunter* learns about the British boogieman's second coming. *Photographs by Taryn Simon*

BACKSTAGE PASS Two looks at what happens once the curtain's gone down.

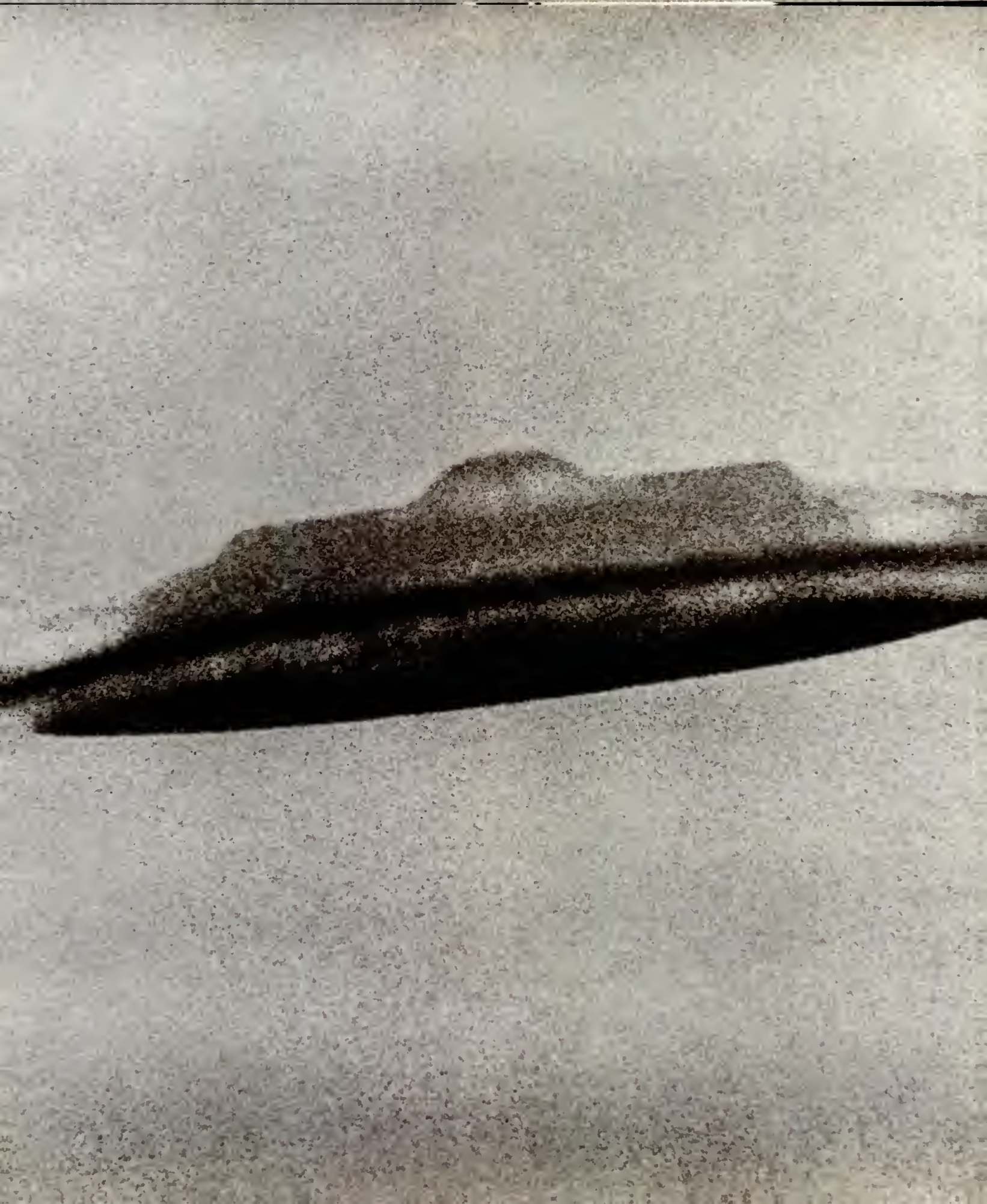
NO SLEEP TILL STOCKHOLM Roots drummer *Ahmir "?uestlove" Thompson* documents three weeks on the road—in Europe—with a hip hop band.
Photographs by Ahmir Thompson and Kelo Saunders

THE SHOW, THE AFTER-PARTY, THE HOTEL Starstruck groupies will do almost *anything* for a chance to lead the glamorous life. *Karen R. Good* meets some willful women and the rappers they sweat. *Photographs by Gillian Laub*

CAN'T A BROTHER GET NO LOVE? Hollywood ain't no crystal stair when you're young, sexy, male—and black. *Jeannine Amber* wants to know why Mekhi Phifer, Omar Epps, and Taye Diggs aren't bagging those *Titanic* roles. *Photographs by Robert Maxwell*



ON THE COVER AND ABOVE: Jennifer Lopez photographed exclusively for VIBE by Firooz Zahedi; styling by Emil Wilbekin; makeup by Matthew VanLawin for Artists; hair by Serena Dalcourt for Sharon Gabrielian; manicure by Kristy Jones/Orly for Cosmair; set design by David Rose for Sets and Props. Cover: Vintage silver crochet dress by D&G Dolce & Gabbana; diamond earrings, bracelet, necklace, and ring, all by Harry Winston.
Face & Body: Makeup by L'ORÉAL; hair color by Feria by L'ORÉAL.
Above: Fuchsia dress by Marc Bouwer



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134 VIBEFASHION: COOL LIKE THAT
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Emceeing dads and their kids.
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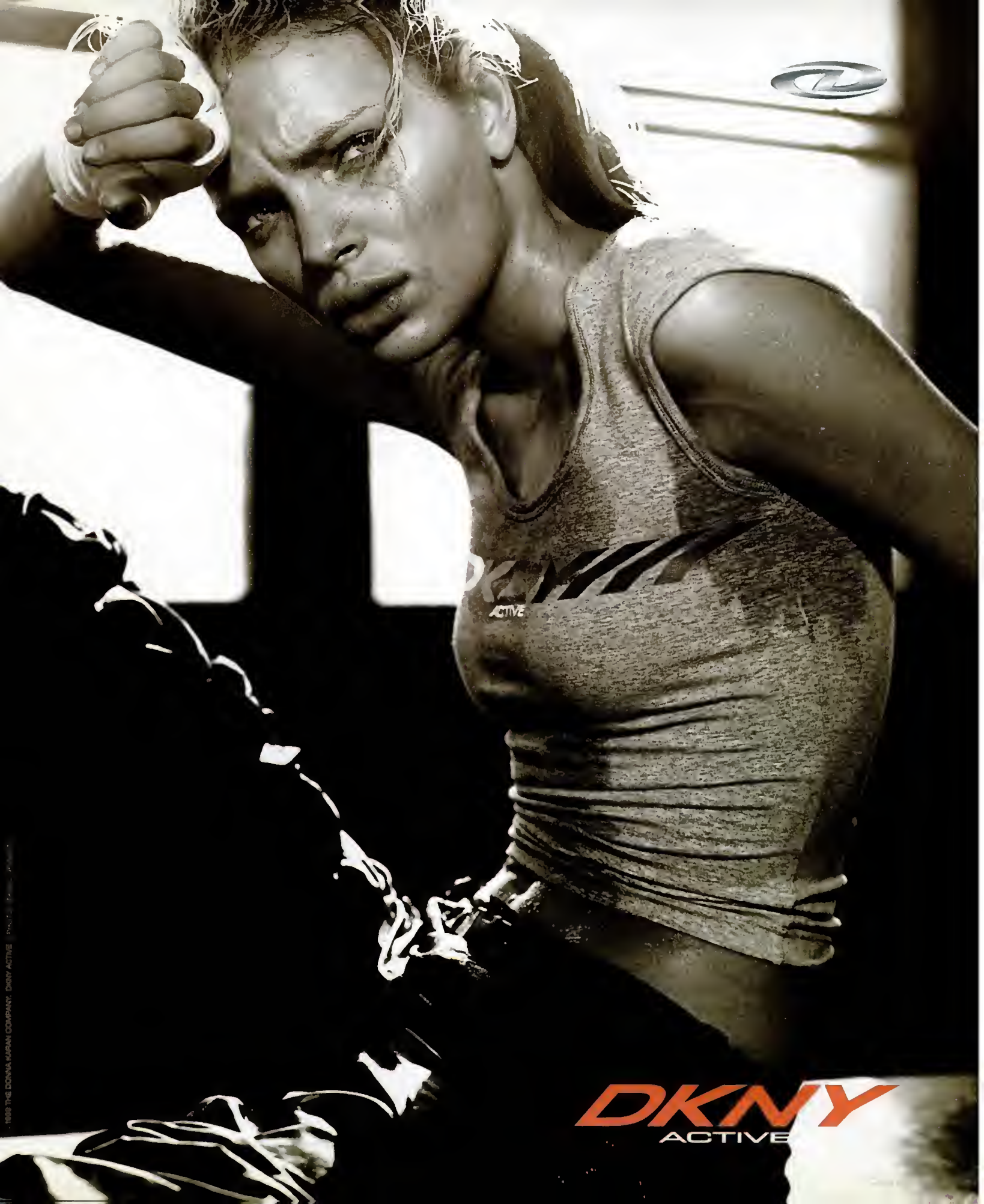
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150 VIBEFACE: NATURAL WOMAN
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Photograph by Isabel Snyder.
Styling by Emil Wilbekin

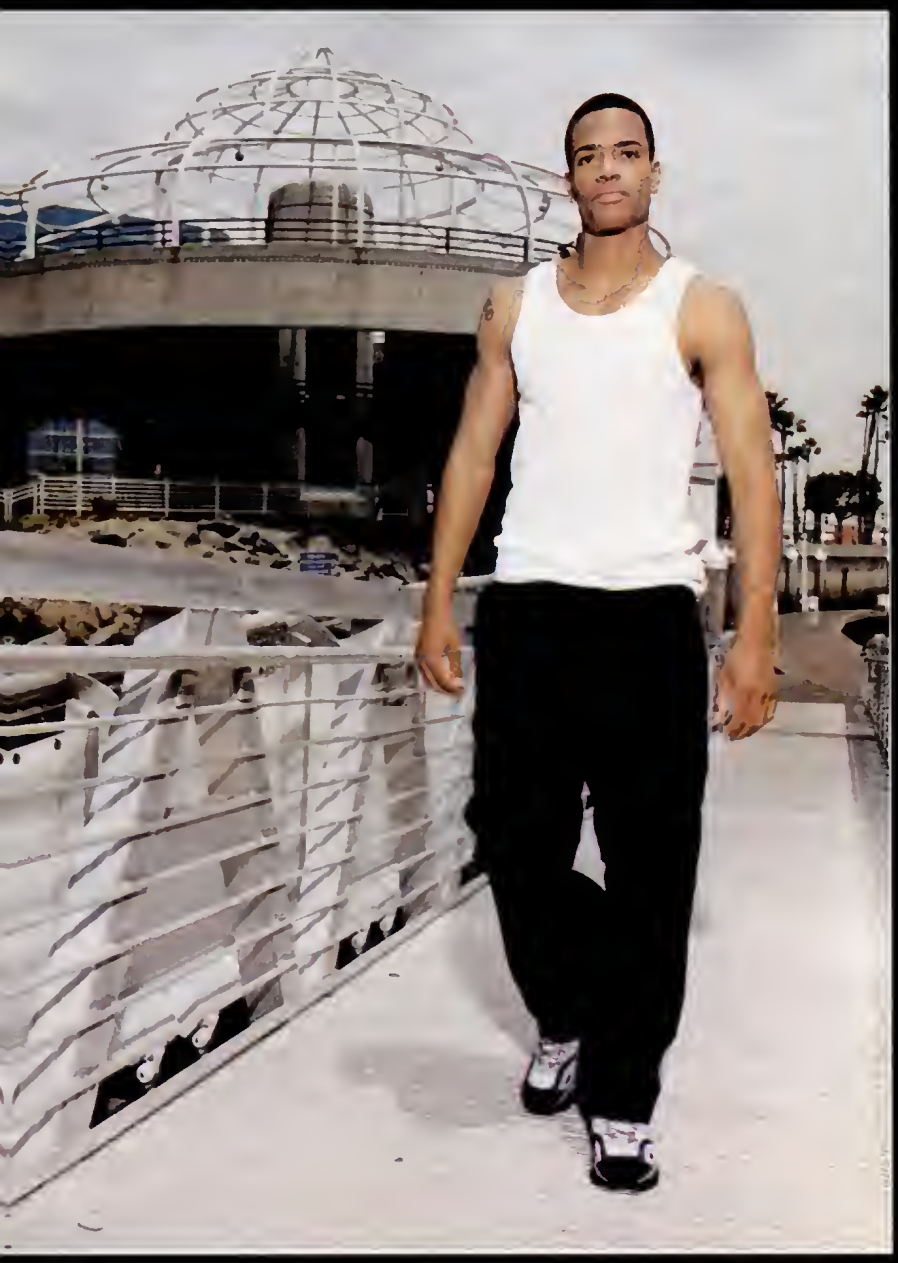
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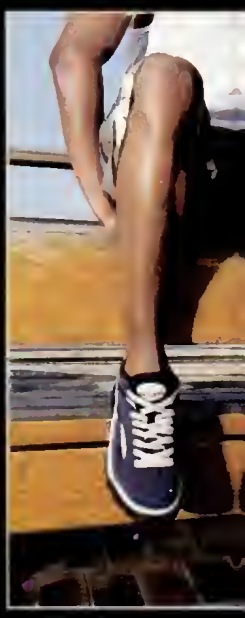
ABOVE: Malinda Williams photographed by Isabel Snyder for L.A. Contact; styling by Emil Wilbekin; makeup by Kara Yoshimoto for Celestine; hair by John Setaro for Cloutier; pink beaded tube top by Emporio Armani.
Face & Body: Makeup by Bobbi Brown Essentials


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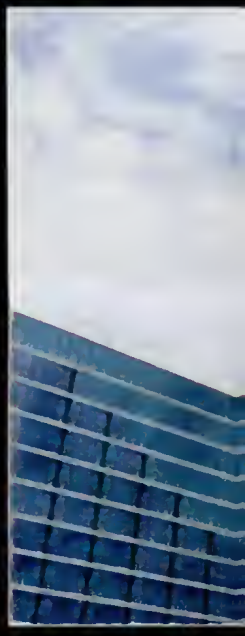
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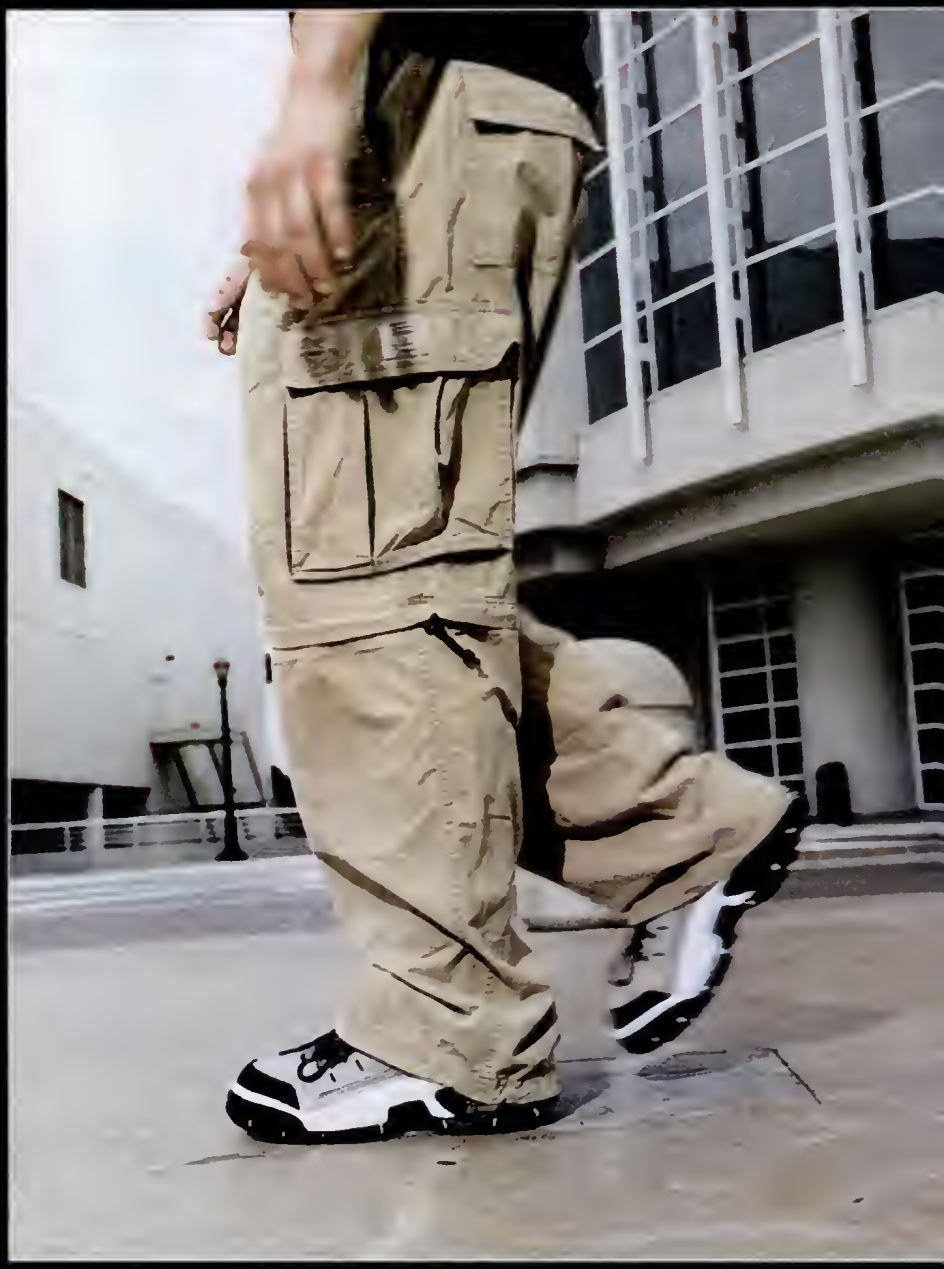


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ABOVE: Black Thought of the Roots on stage in Hamburg, Germany. Photographed by Mika.

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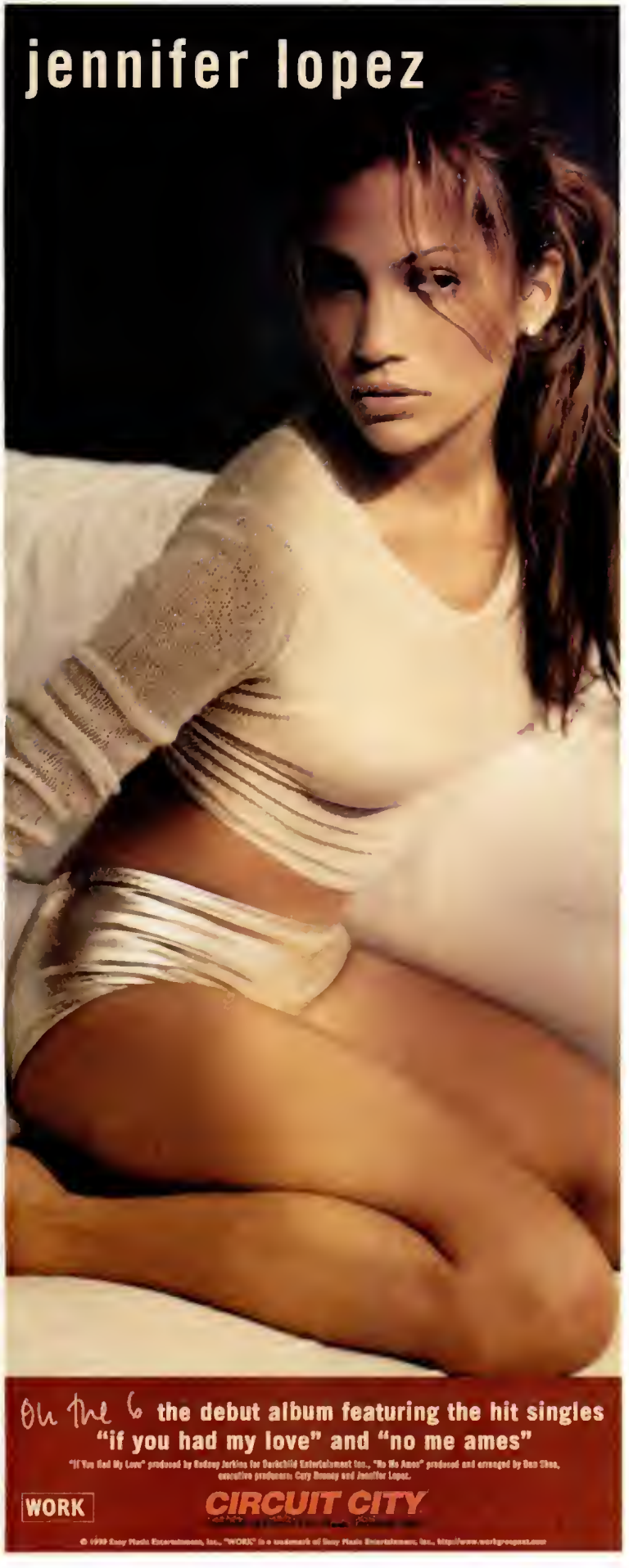
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MEEGAN BARNES

Music right now is really good. J.T. Money's picked up the southern baton from Silkk the Shocker. Ricky Martin is—as people used to say before I was born about things that curled their toes—the living end. Elsewhere, however, I notice a distinct lack of enthusiasm. Maybe I'm crazy, but in certain recent hip hop (and some R&B) videos, the artists look, well, not too excited to be there. And I've seen more than a few performances lately that have been flavorless at best (some excellent exceptions include Wyclef Jean at N.Y.C.'s Float and this new kid Mysonne, who I caught recording in N.Y.C.'s Electric Lady studios). Too much *oohing* and *ahhing* and not enough singing. Or second-rate emceeing and hypercultivated melodrama. That's why I'm loving Will Smith and Dru Hill. I know you've seen that video for "Wild Wild West" 100 times by now. Will and those boys from Baltimore—they are *feeling* it. That big, shiny pop video is about the kind of overflow that makes people say, "That's my *song*! Play that shit again!" No, not the hedz that grip Black Star cassettes like the gold that they are, but folks who occasionally crawl up out of the purely cerebral get a giant kick out of Will and Dru because they look like *joy*. And it's contagious. I'm also digging Ja Rule right now: Holla holla! *What?!?* That song is ree-dic-u-lous. There's nothing like an invitation to scream, and Ja sounds so caught up in his own suggestion that before you even realize it, you're right there with him. It's that half-furious, half-ecstatic, rah-rah, wave-your-hands-in-the-air-and-party-like-you-just-don't-care stance hip hop was built upon. I don't mind videographic special effects. I don't mind glow-in-the-dark costumes or choreographed dance sequences (in fact, I love them). What I do mind, though, is a lack of—or fake—passion. It bothers me when people show up, but they're not really there. It's like sex, man: If you're not gonna take me to a whole new world, stay out of the bed (or off the floor). Hip hop is at a zenith right now, and I don't want it to go away. Nothing stays hot forever, but the reason hip hop has stayed so hot for so long is because the people who've been creating it have been living for it standing up for it representing for it and in some cases even dying for it. None of us—fans, artists, journalists, radio people, label people—can take this hip hop thing for granted. If you don't wanna freak it, stay off the stage.

MUSIC IS LIKE SEX, MAN: IF YOU'RE NOT GONNA TAKE ME TD A WHOLE NEW WORLD, STAY OUT OF THE BED (OR OFF THE FLOOR).

DANYEL SMITH
Editor-in-Chief

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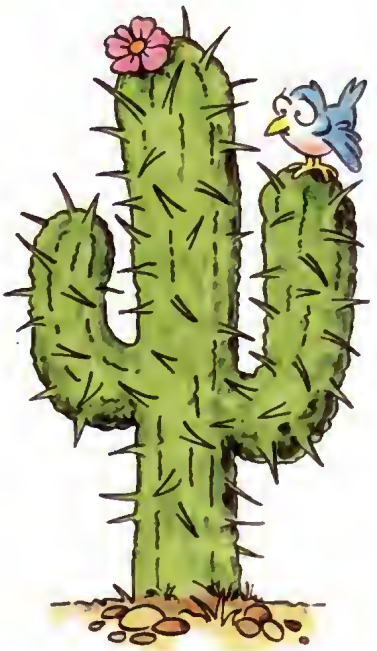
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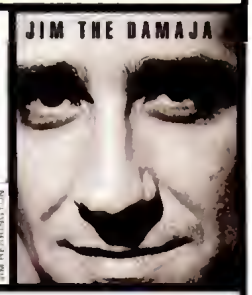
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THE GUEST LIST



"I never wanted to be a journalist," says the Roots' drummer **Ahmir "?uestlove" Thompson**. "I just happen to articulate my opinion better when no one is interrupting. And the prime way to do that is on paper." This month, Brother ?uestion provides VIBE with some entries from his spring European tour diary ("No Sleep Till Stockholm," page 118). In his spare time, he hones his literary chops by writing record reviews for the Roots' website (*www.okayplayer.com*). Thompson, who majored in instrumental music at Philly's University of the Arts, was *always* an "A" student. When asked a second time about his journalistic pursuits, he opens up. "Yes, okay, maybe I am a closet journalist. It's like, all of the symptoms are there."

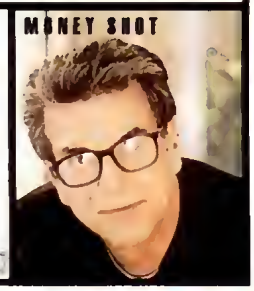
"I listen to everything," says seasoned scribe **James Hunter**, "from Hanson to Jeru the Damaja." Jazz-fusing with Jamiroquai this month ("JKNY," page 112), Hunter adds to an impressive résumé that already includes pieces for *The New York Times Magazine*, *Spin*, *The Village Voice*, and the *New York Observer*. But not only does the 41-year-old West Virginian write about music, he's *been* about it. "I grew up studying piano and composition," he says. "I've produced bands. I've done A&R. I really like to work with artists." Sounds like someday James might just put down the pen and pick up the mike.



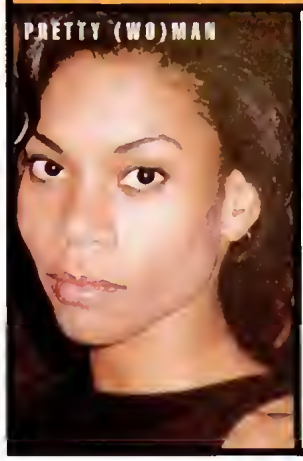


No stranger to the pages of VIBE, **dream hampton** makes a foray into the worlds of pop music and Hollywood with her Jennifer Lopez cover story ("Boomin' System," page 98). But hampton says the American public's got it all wrong with its booty-based assessment of Lopez's appeal. "The sexiest thing about Jennifer is her laugh," says the Detroit native, who chronicled Jay-Z's past hustling in our December '98/January '99 issue. "When you hear it, it's like, this is what happiness sounds like."

Who shot ya? Pose this question to members of Hollywood's A list, and more often than not you'll get the answer "**Firooz Zahedi**." But the Iran-born Los Angeles resident, who's worked with everyone from Steven Spielberg to Robert De Niro, will tell you that it hasn't been all gravy photographing showbiz's finest. "Some celebrities don't really give that much, they leave it all up to me to deliver." But as you can see from Zahedi's *muy caliente* pics of Jennifer Lopez, this month's cover subject was the perfect photo subject. "Jennifer really gets into it," Zahedi says. "She studies the Polaroids and perfects the pose."



IN-HOUSE COUNSEL



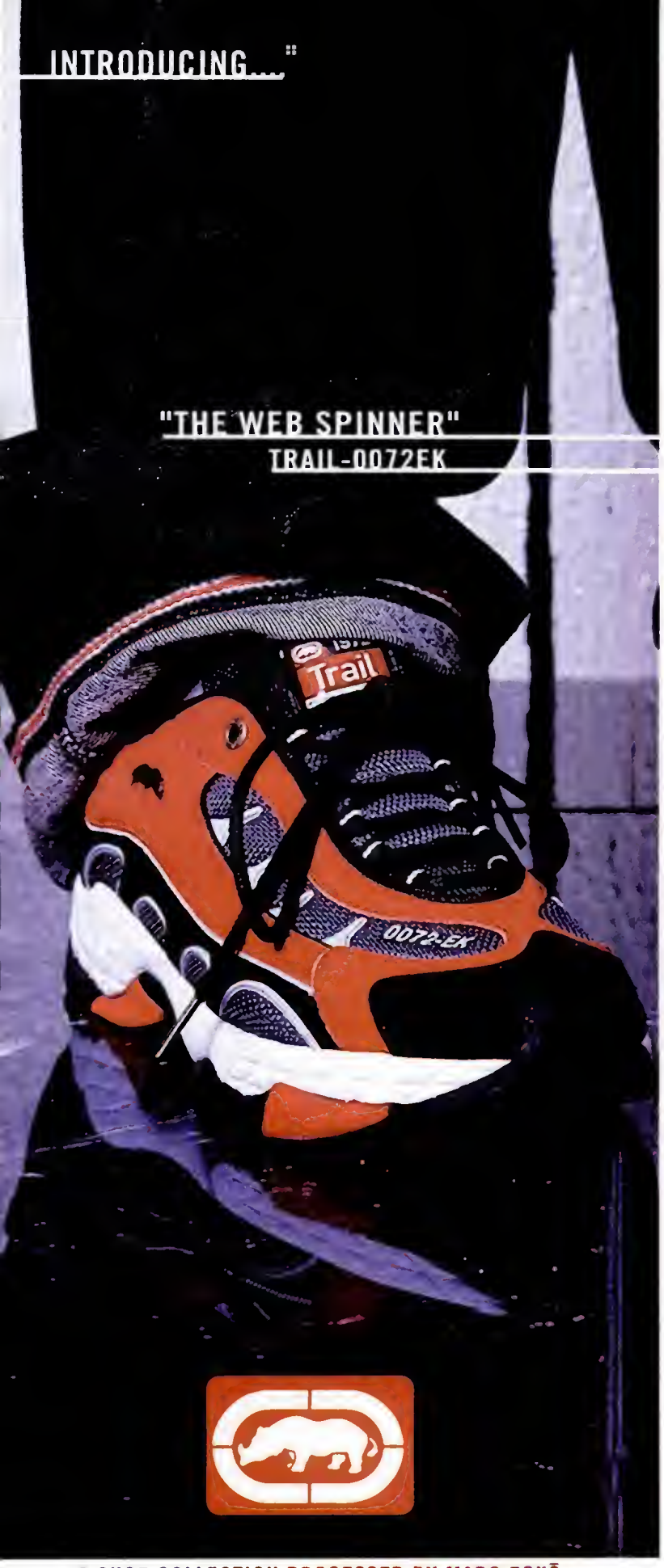
Copy editor **Terri Prettyman** is the resident Grammarma of VIBE (Get it? Like, "grand mama." Okay...it's corny.). In her ongoing struggle to maintain subject-verb agreement and make sure our "i"s come before our "e"s, except, of course, after our "c"s, Prettyman is instrumental in not only maintaining correct grammar, but in providing readers with VIBE's unique stylish voice. "I'm not a proofreader," says the 25-year-old, who did runway and print modeling while she was a student at Howard University. "It's not all spellcheck. It's more about actual editing and negotiating with other editors to get the best stories possible." Teaching runs in this pretty girl's family, and guru blood definitely flows freely through her veins. "Even though exchanges with editors reluctant to change their copy can get heated," says Prettyman, "in the end, they realize it's better to get it right than to have something crazy." Calm down, illiterate children. Mother Terri knows best.



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SPEAK EASY

APPEARANCE

"I was short, fat, hairy, and had pasty white skin. Kids used to call me 'dwarf' and 'leprechaun.' Oh, it was a happy time—loads of fun."
—Robin Williams, the childhood years (*Movieline online*)

"I dressed to cover up my puppies, but then I got dissed on E! The guy said I wasn't sexy. That's the last time I try to conform. From now on, I'm going to let my puppies out and let them bark at the world."
—Lisa Nicole Carson on hiding her mammarian "pets" at, coincidentelly, the Golden Globe Awards (*US*)

"I shave my armpits. And I wouldn't be caught dead at Lilith Fair. Can you imagine the communal smell? Having hairy legs doesn't make you more free, only more ugly!"
—Rose McGowan, a.k.a. The Hairless Wonder (*New York Post*)

"I'm not handsome in the classical sense. The eyes droop, the mouth is crooked, the teeth aren't straight, the voice sounds like a mafioso pallbearer..."
—Sylvester Stallone...yummy (Celebrities' Quotes website)

"These are the results of a thousand electric volts / A neck with bolts / Nurse we're losin' him check the pulse / A kid who refused to respect adults / Wore spectacles with taped frames and a freckled nose / A corny lookin' white boy, scrawny and always ornery / 'Cause I was always sick of brawny bullies pickin' on me / And I might snap, one day just like that."
—Eminem, "Brain Damage" (Interscope)

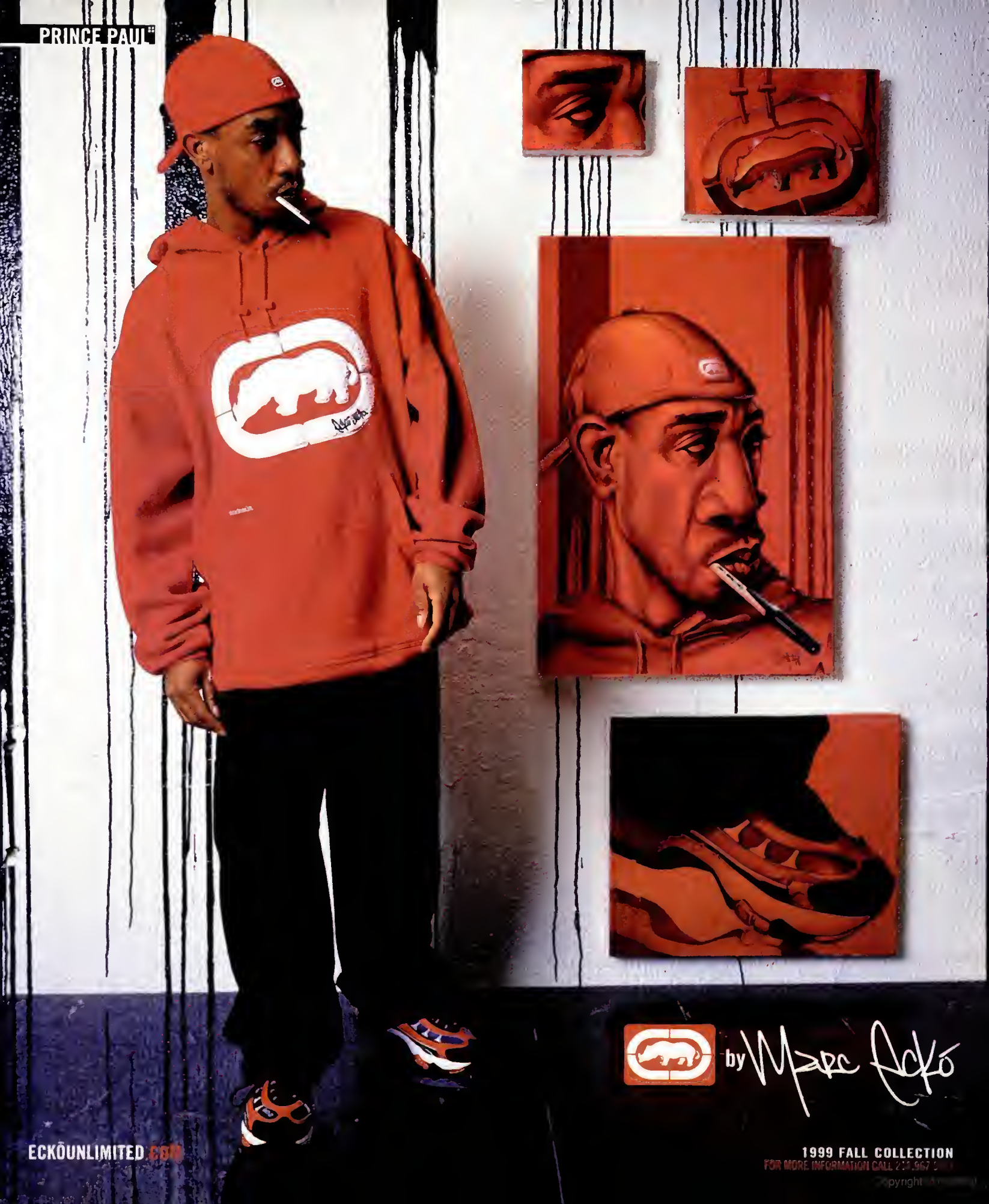
editor's choice

"If you're a young Asian, Hispanic, or black male and feeling hated, you leave your home in the ghetto to 'hook up' with friends so you can go out in the streets and beat up or kill someone in a similar group but wearing different colors—then you belong to a 'gang.' If you're a young white male and not feeling included because you're not on the [sports] teams, you pull on your black trench coat, leave your room in your upper-middle-class neighborhood, join your buddies, and then proceed to...cold-bloodedly kill 15 people and wound countless others as you laugh and spew hate and racial slurs—then you belong to a 'clique.'"
—Sociologist Orlando Patterson (*The New York Times*)

from the VIBE vault

JUNE/JULY 1997

"Other Latina actresses are often unfairly passed over for substantial film roles because they're considered too street (Rosie Perez) or too ethnic (Lauren Vélez) by studio execs. Lopez's olive skin, long hair, voluptuous body, and easy sensuality make her a safe choice—she fits Hollywood's perception of a typical Spanish siren. 'Latinas are sexy in general,' says Lopez, 'but I'm not worried about stereotypes; sexy is not all that I am.'"
—Mimi Valdés, quoting Jennifer Lopez, the official butter-pecan Rican


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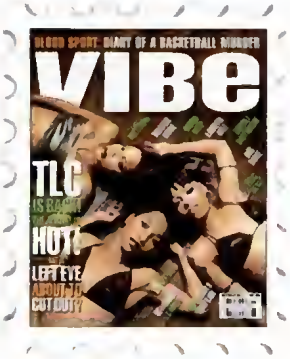


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MAIL



FAN MAIL?

I just finished reading your article on TLC ["Three the Hard Way," by Anthony DeCurtis, May 1999], and TLC, here's a message about scrubs. I'm a man who lives with his mother and who walks and sits on the passenger's side. How do these things make me less of a man?

"'A SCRUB IS A MAN WHO BEATS ON ME AND LEAVES ME BLACK-AND-BLUE / A SCRUB IS A MAN WHO'S NOT A FATHER TO HIS KIDS.' YOU SHOULD BE SINGING ABOUT THE *REAL* SCRUBS OF THIS CRUEL WORLD."

I'm completely disenchanted that they might disband. T-Boz, Left Eye, and Chilli have each got the body, talent, and attitude that it takes to make it. If Left Eye decides to pull a Ginger Spice, that's *her* dumb ass, but the move would be a gamble. TLC balance each other out whether rapping, singing, or harmonizing. It would be a shame to lose such a talented group among a sea of biters.

Nate White Jr.
Fayetteville, NC

I'd like to praise you for putting TLC on the cover and for writing a wonderful article on them after such a long time. I'm a *huge* fan. They look original and refreshing. And I really love the idea of Chilli representing on the album's first cut.

Miodrag Marjanovic
Karlovac, Croatia

I have two words to describe TLC's album: *Boo-tay*. Never in my wildest dreams would I think T-Boz, Left Eye, and Chilli would sink so low. There's no "Ain't Too Proud to Beg," "Creep," or "Red Light Special." The hip hop beats have been replaced with spaced-out ones. Plus, Dallas Austin hasn't had many dope moments since Monica's debut. They've fallen harder than Snoop, Boyz II Men, En Vogue, Bobby Brown, and Hammer all together. *FanMail* was a waste of my money. Where are JD, Puff, and Rodney when you need them?

Julian Fennell
Charlotte, NC

So I came up with some lyrics for you: "A scrub is a man who beats on me and leaves me black-and-blue / A scrub is a man who's not a father to his kids." You should be singing about the *real* scrubs of this cruel world.

Freddie Strubs
Brooklyn, NY

Big up to Anthony DeCurtis for his outstanding TLC article. It showed all sides of the TLC triangle—the ups, the downs, and the volatile moments. Whether Left Eye is about to be out is irrelevant. *FanMail* is all that. TLC are still crazy, sexy, and cool.

Heavenli
London, England

I want to commend VIBE on the beautiful TLC cover. I'd also like to encourage these ladies to please stay together. Don't forget that it took all three talented women to make TLC who they are today. United we stand, but divided we fall. No matter how hard it gets, commitment must prevail. Much love and respect to TLC for lyrically spitting motivation, education, and rejuvenation to a falling generation.

Sheila Green
Las Vegas, NV

BAD TO THE BONE

Your article on Krayzie Bone ["Bone Thug, Not Bonehead," by Marc Weingarten, May 1999] was *off the hook*. It shows how much he's gone from rags to riches and how talented he is. Krayzie's doing it all—producing, writing, and rapping in mad style. He knows that in order to make it and be respected in the music industry you can't be afraid to show your ideas. No wonder so many artists want to work with him. He's amazing and deserves much props.

Arely Garcia
Bronx, NY

Since I'm a true thug from Cleveland, Bone Thugs-N-Harmony have been one of my favorite rap groups ever since Eazy-E put them on. Krayzie and the rest of Bone get respect because they are one of the true innovators in the game. All the new jacks coming out should aim to be innovators, not just participators.

Famous A. Jackson
Marietta, GA (by way of Cleveland)



YOUR BEST SHOT **Maria T. Fiszio, Philadelphia, Pa.**


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KISS THE GIRLS

I must offer you a trillion thanks for the Eric Benét story ["Love-Sexy," by Amy Linden, May 1999.] He's the *epitome* of soul. Eric, you're astoundingly incredible and I look forward to "A Day in the Life" with you!!

Victoria Owens
Baltimore, MD

Eric Benét's music oozes sensuality, but I look beyond his sex-symbol status. He's both honest and entertaining. Folks shouldn't sleep on his sophomore album.

Mocha Sunflower the Rhythm Goddess
Brooklyn, NY

ORDER ON THE COURT?

After reading "Mob Rule" [by Randi Glatzer, May 1999], I was deeply saddened. How could someone have taken this handsome young man's life over something he didn't even say? Murders like this one hurt the most because he was so young and had such a promising future. I noticed that during the interview his mother's words sounded very calm. Deep down in her heart she must know, like I know, that he's in a better place than in this cruel, cruel world. I keep his family–and his killers–in my prayers.

Candice Swinton
Miami, FL

How could little boys commit such a horrible crime? The problem with today's youth is that they fear nothing. Neither the police nor the jail system scares them the least bit. Someone needs to teach these kids that prison life is not the way to go. And if we as their elders don't teach them, they will learn like I did–the hard way.

J. Page Mullane
Freehold, NJ

"I CAN'T SEE 'TRUMP DADDY' KICKIN' IT WITH A BROKE BLACK MAN WHO PANHANDLES IN FRONT OF TRUMP TOWERS."

I tried to make sense of the unnecessary tragedy of Michael Bennett's murder, but the bottom line is that there was no reason for that little boy to die. My heart goes out to the Bennett family, and I can only hope and pray that our young black men think like the rational and intelligent individuals that they are, as opposed to becoming overpowered by the group. Let's think before we act.

Tokes O.
Valley Stream, NY

TRUMP CARD

Your Donald Trump story was sickening ["Money Boss Player," Nancy Jo Sales, May 1999]. It was pathetic to read about big-wig music heads such as Andre Harrell, Russell Simmons, and Puffy chillin' with a billionaire mogul who couldn't give 2 cents about them. Trump admittedly doesn't know about hip hop music nor does he know the names of most of the artists who mention him on their albums. Financial gain and fame have unfortunately given celebrities from the ghetto a false sense of harmonious race relations. I can't see "Trump Daddy," as he has been so affectionately named, kickin' it with a broke black man who panhandles in front of Trump Towers. It's as if the more money you make the less of a nigger you become.

C. Dinkins
Brooklyn, NY

HEAR ME ROAR

Thanks for acknowledging our beautiful black princess Lauryn Hill ["The Day the World Woke Up," by Karen Good, May 1999]. Lauryn has come *very* far since going solo. She gets props 'cause she never forgets where she comes from. I'll tell you one thing: Me, you, *and* ya momma know that she's gonna keep on risin' to the top.

Ronnie Crawford, a.k.a.
"Hakuna-Matata"
New Rochelle, NY

BOOTYFULL

If I wanted to see half-naked women fondling themselves with their booties up in the air, I would have subscribed to *Playboy* or *Hustler*. Of course I'm referring to the "fashion" section ["Southern Comfort," May 1999]. I know this may be a surprise to you guys at VIBE, but some of your female subscribers are actually interested in *men*. And it would be nice if you could show some half-naked men in your magazine every now and then. I would *not* be mad. Offend some of your male subscribers for a change.

Cheryl Anderson
New Orleans, LA

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tise these items performing lewd acts involving open legs, untamed breasts, and butts covered by nothing more than dental floss? We value VIBE for its portrayal of inspirational black people. Yet when this is what graces the inside of your magazine, we begin to wonder if we misjudged.

Rochelle L. & Jillian C.
Claymont, DE

YOU DUNN DID IT

I had to say something in response to the article "*Parléz Vous Dunn*?" [by Shaheem Reid, May 1999]. Bottom line is, if heads don't know what those words mean, they don't need to know because obviously they ain't down like that. I mean, isn't it bad enough that we have to worry about everyone else attempting to commercialize us? Listen, where you're from and how you get down should determine the dialect(s) you can spit. The way we express ourselves is what makes us different from one another, gives us dimension, makes us special. Our vernacular reflects our lifestyle, who we know, how we think. Though some slang is universal, much more of it is created by and applies exclusively to a distinct bunch of hardheads. So if you ain't livin' it, don't know nuttin' 'bout it, and ain't down with anybody that is, none of that junk need come from your mouth. Understand?

Mahasin Muhammad
Dorchester, MA

REAL WOMEN

The article "Girls II Women" by Danyel Smith [Start, May 1999] was one of the most straight-up articles about female artists I've read in a long time. Women in R&B have been trying to make their talents known for a long time. To women like Mary J. Blige and Lauryn Hill who came with it raw, mad respect! Thank you for letting the world know how strong females are in 1999.

Corrina
San Diego, CA

Thank God for such a well-written article. I agree with every word expressed. It makes me very proud to be a fan of soul music. I adore listening to the music and trying to understand the meaning behind the lyrics. Soul music is about pure love. Today's R&B singers *are* awesome in their own right, representing the lives of people today. They *are* the legends of tomorrow.

"SOME SLANG IS UNIVERSAL, BUT MUCH MORE OF IT APPLIES EXCLUSIVELY TO A DISTINCT BUNCH OF HARDHEADS. SO IF YOU AIN'T LIVIN' IT, NONE OF THAT JUNK NEED COME FROM YOUR MOUTH."

Durrun Franco
Karmiel, Israel

TEFLON DON

This is ridiculous [Start, "Ol' Dirty Bastard Battles the Law, but Who Won?," by Peter Relic, May 1999]. How much longer is our society going to allow law enforcement to cover up their violence against blacks? We're not all guilty. As for body armor, I believe all black men should wear bulletproof vests under these conditions—especially those in entertainment, so we don't lose another like Tupac.

Ron Pointer
Omaha, NE

ODB is truly sick. He fathers 13 children, then he has the nerve

Cathy and Rita could have stayed late at work and looked really dedicated, but that would have entailed staying late at work and looking really dedicated.



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to change his name to Big Baby Jesus. Somebody should kick his ass. If I could give him a name it would be Stupid Dirty Illiterate Ignorant Funky Ghetto Nigga Who Needs to Get Some Knowledge About Humanity.

Janae W
Country Club Hills, IL

L-EVATE YOUR MIND

What the hell? How are you jerks gonna lowercase Big L [Start, Hard Knock News, by Peter Relic, May 1999]? That brief message you printed was an insult. You folks need to unlock that dead bolt you call journalism. Peep this criticism: Big L had unique rhythm, so why couldn't he get a whole page? I know he wasn't commercial, but he still brought the Harlem sound from the underground like it was homemade, not like that ho Mase. Big L deserved more. You morons have no taste.

Twaan "Swordz" the Mad Reader
Hampton, VA

TRUTH AND CONSEQUENCES

This is in response to a comment made about Tuph Street: Truth and Consequences ["Dead Man Walking," by Flo Malone, April 1999] in the May 1999 Mail. Someone said that prison is the best rehabilitation, but she must be dense. There's absolutely nothing rehabilitating about being surrounded 24 hours a day by rapists, child molesters, murderers, drug addicts, and who knows what else. There's nothing rehabilitating about a justice system that wants to take you out of society, lock you down, then release you without teaching you the "right" way to go about things. There is nothing rehabilitating about those who work in the system telling you that you'll never get a "good" job, a chance to further your education, or a chance to just improve and put the experience behind you. There is nothing rehabilitating about busting your ass in a kitchen that's brick-cold in the winter and hot as fish grease in the summer, all for a mere 23 cents an hour. Then they wonder why some people go back to the streets to make a living. If society cared enough to help those less fortunate, maybe we all could be living comfortably.

Name Withheld
Tray, VA

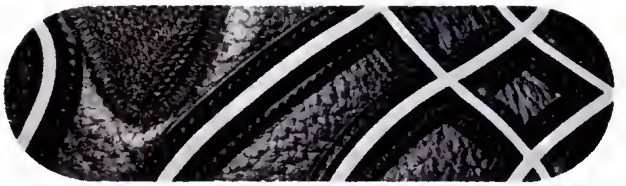
CORRECTIONS

- Rochell Thomas was the editor for VIBE's TV and Books pages, not Minya Oh—who is the top editor—as indicated in the June/July Contributors.
- In the Gear section of the June/July issue, the Tommy Hilfiger and Calvin Klein sunglasses credits were misidentified in the "Catchin' Rays" story. The brands were switched.
- In the June/July issue, Jon Schecter was identified as Eminem's comanager. This is incorrect. Schecter is on Eminem's management team, but Paul Rosenberg is Eminem's sole manager/lawyer.
- In the June/July issue, the Maori people of New Zealand were referred to as a "tribe." That is incorrect. The Maoris are a group indigenous to New Zealand, but they are not a tribe.
- In the Look Opener in the June/July issue, the illustrator's name, Tom Thewes, was misspelled.

VIBE encourages mail and photographs from readers. Please send letters to VIBE MAIL, 215 Lexington Avenue, 6th Floor, New York, NY 10016 (include your daytime phone number). Or send e-mail to vibe@vibe.com. Send photos to VIBE YOUR BEST SHOT (same address). Include your full name, address, and daytime phone number. Letters may be edited for length and clarity. Photo submissions will become the property of VIBE and will not be returned.

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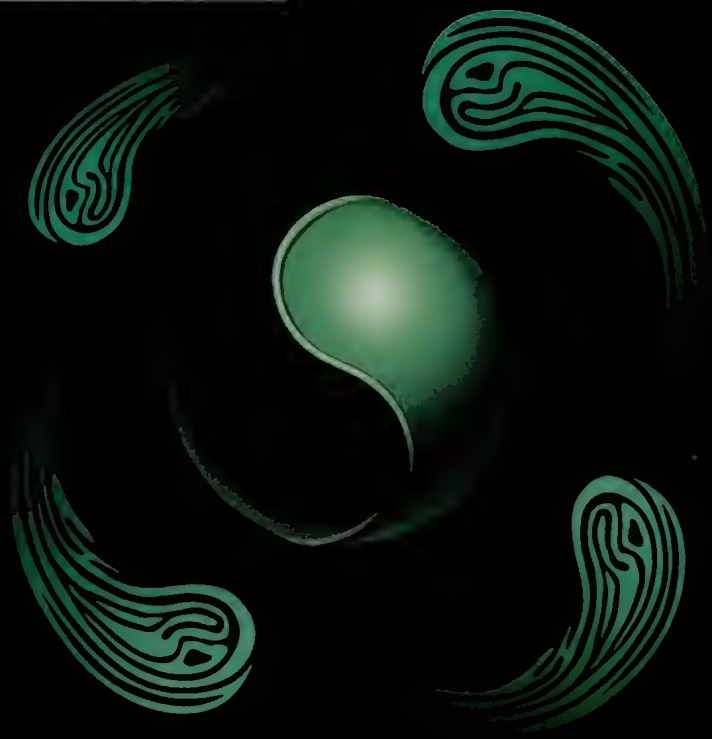
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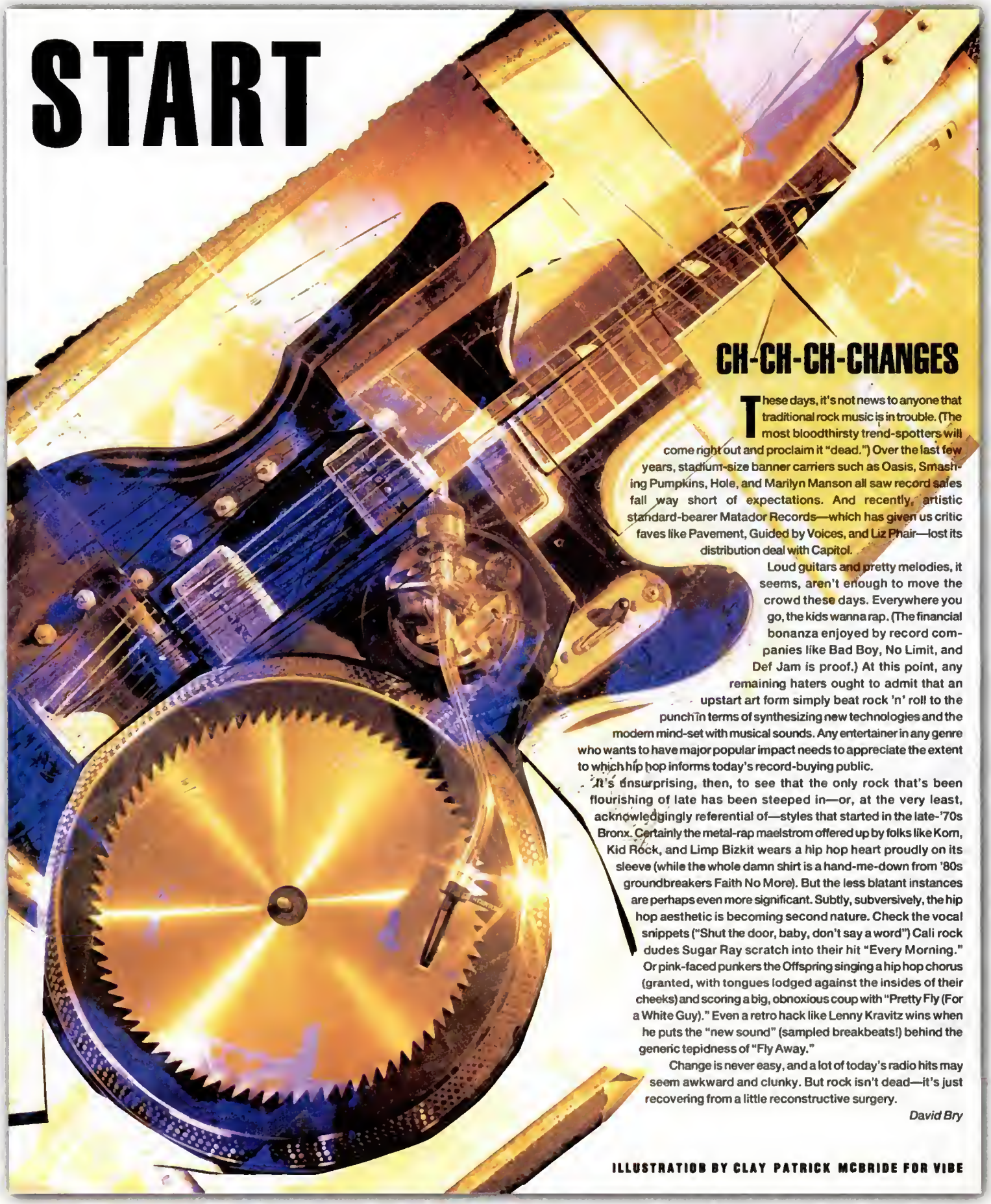
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START



CH-CH-CH-CHANGES

These days, it's not news to anyone that traditional rock music is in trouble. (The most bloodthirsty trend-spotters will come right out and proclaim it "dead.") Over the last few years, stadium-size banner carriers such as Oasis, Smashing Pumpkins, Hole, and Marilyn Manson all saw record sales fall way short of expectations. And recently, artistic standard-bearer Matador Records—which has given us critic faves like Pavement, Guided by Voices, and Liz Phair—lost its distribution deal with Capitol.

Loud guitars and pretty melodies, it seems, aren't enough to move the crowd these days. Everywhere you go, the kids wanna rap. (The financial bonanza enjoyed by record companies like Bad Boy, No Limit, and Def Jam is proof.) At this point, any remaining haters ought to admit that an upstart art form simply beat rock 'n' roll to the punch in terms of synthesizing new technologies and the modern mind-set with musical sounds. Any entertainer in any genre who wants to have major popular impact needs to appreciate the extent to which hip hop informs today's record-buying public.

It's unsurprising, then, to see that the only rock that's been flourishing of late has been steeped in—or, at the very least, acknowledgingly referential of—styles that started in the late-'70s Bronx. Certainly the metal-rap maelstrom offered up by folks like Korn, Kid Rock, and Limp Bizkit wears a hip hop heart proudly on its sleeve (while the whole damn shirt is a hand-me-down from '80s groundbreakers Faith No More). But the less blatant instances are perhaps even more significant. Subtly, subversively, the hip hop aesthetic is becoming second nature. Check the vocal snippets ("Shut the door, baby, don't say a word") Cali rock dudes Sugar Ray scratch into their hit "Every Morning." Or pink-faced punkers the Offspring singing a hip hop chorus (granted, with tongues lodged against the insides of their cheeks) and scoring a big, obnoxious coup with "Pretty Fly (For a White Guy)." Even a retro hack like Lenny Kravitz wins when he puts the "new sound" (sampled breakbeats!) behind the generic tepidness of "Fly Away."

Change is never easy, and a lot of today's radio hits may seem awkward and clunky. But rock isn't dead—it's just recovering from a little reconstructive surgery.

David Bry

ILLUSTRATION BY CLAY PATRICK MCBRIDE FOR VIBE

TURNTABLE PROVIDED BY ROCK AND SOUL ELECTRONICS INC., N.Y.C. GUITAR PROVIDED BY DAN'S CHELSEA GUITARS INC., N.Y.C.

SOUND CHECK

Bobbito plays the tracks. Coko states the facts.

Ever since the lackluster sound of new jack swing came to the forefront, I can't really name too many R&B joints that I've loved. Key exceptions were SWV's songs "Right Here," "Can We," and "Lose My Cool." Those girls could hold their own with any group from any decade. Now their former lead singer, Coko, is branching off with her solo project, tentatively titled *Hot Coko* (RCA), which features vocals from Eve of Ruff Ryders and production from Rodney Jerkins. Before we met, I didn't know Coko was so tall—or so humble and sweet. *¡Que linda!*

Donna Summer—"I Love You" (Casablanca, 1977)

C: I know who this is! My idol, Donna Summer.

B: Your mom tipped me off that you loved her.

C: I was in her fan club. We got T-shirts and posters and a card with her autograph on it.

B: Why were you so crazy about her?

C: She had the best songs. "Last Dance," "Love to Love You, Baby," and "Unconditional Love."

B: Oh yeah, with Musical Youth. That was hot.

Morcheeba and Hubert Laws—"Summertime" (Red Hot/Verve, 1998)

C: Who is this?

B: Morcheeba—they're out of London. They've had two albums. The second one, *Big Calm* (Sire, 1998), was phenomenal.

C: My son's father listens to this.

B: His father likes acid jazz and trip hop?

C: [He's] a jazz rapper, Butterfly from Digable Planets. He's opened me up to different kinds of music. I wouldn't normally listen to something like this, but he'll play it around the house.

B: What else do you listen to when you're home?

C: A lot of gospel. I grew up in a Pentecostal Church singing gospel. I like the group Men of Standard. I like Karen Clark's sister, Twinkie Clark.

B: Her name is Twinkie? Do you listen to a lot of rap?

C: On the radio. I like the commercial stuff. I know Lord Finesse, and I grew up in the Bronx with Fat Joe, Showbiz & AG. I like their stuff a lot too.

LaBelle "Goin' on a Holiday" (RCA, 1973)

C: Patti LaBelle?

B: Yeah.

C: She was on RCA? Get out of here! She's another one of my favorites. I love anything she does. Her vocal range...she does it so naturally.

B: She's such a beautiful person too. Her whole family is. I got to know them a bit when I was in high school.

C: SWV did a tribute to her at the Essence Awards last year. We sang "Lady Marmalade." Everyone was shocked because we had on the exact outfits she used to wear, with the big feathers. Did somebody tip you that I love her too?

B: Nah. I've played this song at the last couple of parties I've spun at and it transforms the night for me. It's so powerful I lose my mind in the booth. People look up at me from the dance floor and I'm dancing 10 times heavier than they are.



Head & shoulders: Bobbito's soft on Coko

PHOTOGRAPH BY LESLIE DELA VEGA

Break Ups to Make Ups

While Cheryl "Coko" Gamble drops her debut solo album, the other former Sisters With Voices are modeling, taking care of their kids, and even learning about mortuary science

I've been without SWV for a year now. Our breakup wasn't mutual, but there's no tension. I'm Coko's son's godmother, so I see her occasionally. Right now I'm working on my demo. I'm still signed with Ford Models in New York, but they moved me to the full-figured division because I'm a 7/8. I also do charity events and lecture at different schools. The way I see it, I'm in my 20s now and I have every door open for me. I can do a solo album, clothing line, or start a company. I don't see why I should leave any opportunities unturned.

Regarding our breakup: I called to find out when the next show was and heard that Cheryl [Coko] didn't want to be a part of it any more. I don't think it had anything to do with her, I think it was the people around her. I don't care how many solo albums she does, SWV is home for her. I love her to death and wish her lots of luck. Right now I'm working with producer Joe "Flip" Wilson on my demo. My goals are to own a funeral home and get my license in mortuary science. I took mortuary lessons and learned how to make incisions and use embalming fluids. Also, my best friend, Shareen King, and I have a management company called Lyons-King, and we're working with a couple of groups. I have something to prove to our fans, and I'm going to. *Kenya N. Byrd*



SWV days: Lelee (left) and Taj flank Coko

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THRILLING ME SWIFTLY

R&B princesses Divine, Blaque, Destiny's Child, and 702 take the plunge on this summer's most exciting thrill rides



Lord have mercy! Nikki, Tonia, and Kia (left to right) are Divine

DIVINE



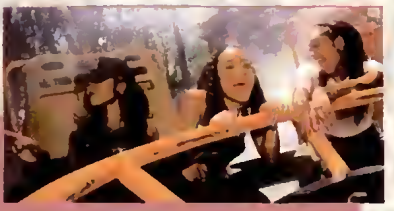
PARK Knott's Berry Farm, Buena Park, Calif.
RIDE GhostRider
WILD RIDE FACT This wooden coaster's 14 drops are enough to faze Johnny Blaze.

A gut-twisting adrenaline rush is what every roller-coaster fiend lives for, and Divine are no exception. So Tonia's assessment—Knott's Berry Farm's GhostRider makes "you feel like your heart's coming out of your body"—is high praise. Even Nikki, Divine's avowed "anti-roller coaster" member, admits, "If I'm still alive afterwards then it's all good." Right now Divine have a lot to live for, on the strength of their platinum-selling single, "Lately," and their remake of George Michael's 1987 hit "One More Try." "When you're on a roller coaster," says Kia, "you're a little nervous, like when you first get on stage." Adds Nikki: "But once you're on the ride—like once you're on stage—there's no turning back." And with that, Divine headed off to sing the national anthem before an L.A. Clippers game.

Karmel Graham



Blaque go Mickey Mouse Clubbin': (from left) Natina, Shamari, and Brandi



BLAQUE

PARK Disney's Animal Kingdom at Walt Disney World, Lake Buena Vista, Fla.
RIDE Kali River Rapids
WILD RIDE FACT Rafters travel through a bamboo tunnel filled with jasmine-scented mist.

So, Blaque, your current single, "808," is bouncing its way to the Top 10 on *Billboard*'s pop-singles chart, and you've got the equally hot "I Do" ready to follow in its footsteps. You're on the "Ain't No Stopping Us Now" tour with one of the top-selling acts in the world, 'N Sync. Where do you head on your day off? Walt Disney World, of course. Although Kali River Rapids isn't a roller coaster, it provides just as many chills and thrills, offering its passengers a trip through an artificial jungle, up-close exposure to real-looking flames and, as the girls found out, a shower. "I got soaked," laughs Shamari. "My hair and my booty were wet." But Blaque didn't let the downpour dampen their enthusiasm. "We came out real drenched," Natina says. "And we wanted to do it again."

Shaheem Reid

START

DESTINY'S CHILD

PARK: Six Flags AstroWorld, Houston
RIDE: Texas Tornado
WILD RIDE FACT: It's the steepest four-loop coaster in the world.

Ever find yourself on a roller coaster singing Destiny's Child's 1997 hit "No, No, No Part 2"? Slowly ascending that first high hill, looking down and screaming, "No, no, no!"? Then a heart-stopping drop, a couple of sharp turns, and a few loops later, you're hollering, "Yeah, yeah, yeah!"? Well, we caught the four Houston honeys of Destiny's Child trying to capture those same contrary emotions aboard the Texas Tornado. "It was *crazy*—we were just trying to hold our hats on," says Beyoncé of the coaster's initial 112-foot plunge at a 70-degree angle. "It's a tummy tickler," adds LeToya. "Going up halfway and seeing you're about to fall, you're like, *Wait, wait.*" The wait for Destiny's Child's new album, *The Writing's on the Wall*, ends this summer. *S.R.*



Destiny's Child are four for Texas: (from left) Beyoncé, LeToya, Kelly, and La Tavia



Two from 702: Kameelah (left) and Irish

702

PARK: Paramount's Kings Island, Kings Island, Ohio
RIDE: Face/Off
WILD RIDE FACT: Riders are subjected to five gravitational forces of intensity.

702 may sound all grown-up on their latest single, the Missy Elliott–produced "Where My Girls At?," but they're still down for classic amusement-park thrills on their day off from touring. Or at least Irish—one third of the talented trio—is. Since her pregnant sister, Lemisha, couldn't participate, and third member Kameelah chickened out right before the ride started, Irish picked up the slack by riding Face/Off *three* times, describing the experience as "awful fun...like falling to the bottom of the sea." Of Face/Off's 72-feet-high loop, Irish said, "I couldn't even hold my head up because of the gravity. I felt a little sick afterwards, but it was fun." Meanwhile, Meelah attempted to explain why she bailed: "My father has this fear of roller coasters, so maybe it's genetic. I got butterflies just watching!"

Abby Addis



DIVINE: CARLA CUMMINGS. BLAQUE: PETER TAYLOR. DESTINY'S CHILD: STEVE HARRIS. 702: BRIAN STEEGE

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V LIVE

RICKY MARTIN

April 17, 1999
Carnegie Hall, New York City
PHOTOGRAPHS BY KEVIN MAZUR

As Ricky Martin presses his lips to the mike and gives a mischievous grin, you can't resist joining the masses waving their hands *por arriba* in worship of this Puerto Rican *papi*. Sure, Martin's songs have the lyrical depth of a wading pool. But the 15 million buyers of his first four solo albums were *not* wrong. This boy is *la bomba*. From Menudo to *el mundo*, the 27-year-old crown prince of music's Latin crossover crusade is tearing up the stage and the pop charts. He has also granted Madonna's wish: a kiss. And now he's got *you* living *la vida loca*!

Rochell Thomas

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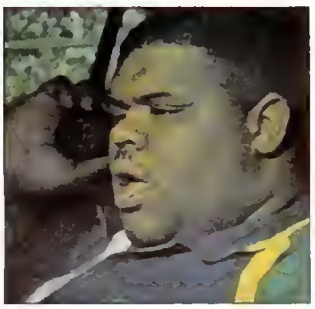
KEEPIN' IT REEL

Five new fringe flicks get skewed on the barbie

In the never-ending saga of hip hop's paper chase, rappers making movies is now a full-fledged trend. Since most major movie houses are not checking for rap cats, the straight-to-video market is the place to see the following cinematic morsels:



TITLE: *All Jokes Aside* (Trump Tight Films)
STARRING: D Militant, Marlon Wayans, Eddie Griffin
PLOT: A documentary about comedians trying to make a living in an unforgiving world.
QUOTE-TASTIC: D Militant: "Toni Braxton is broke? Who was her accountant, Hammer?!?"
MEMORABLE MOMENT: When a guy in the crowd busts a comedian in the eye.
SEQUEL TITLE: *Get Up, Stand Up (For Your Laughs)*
MORAL OF THE STORY: Shit is funny as long as it happens to somebody else.



TITLE: *Beware of Those* (Get Low Pictures)
STARRING: JT the Bigga Figga, Mac Mall
PLOT: The standard two-guys-in-the-'hood-tryin'-to-survive story. One peddles stolen crack while the other works and saves money to buy a record store.
QUOTE-TASTIC: Mac Mall: "I got this jacket the honest way—jackin' muthafuckas."
MEMORABLE MOMENT: When the guy who's supposed to be getting a full basketball scholarship misses layups while practicing alone.
SEQUEL TITLE: *The Phantom Crackhead: Episode One*
MORAL OF THE STORY: A friend cast in your film does not an actor make.



TITLE: *Sneak Attack* (chapter nine in DJ Qbert's animated series, *Wave Twisters*, from Galactic Butt Hair Records)
STARRING: Various cartoon characters created by Bay Area artist DUG-ONE
PLOT: A baby with a lizard-skin umbilical chord, a turntablist doctor, a fire hydrant–shaped robot, and an octopus battle in outer space.
QUOTE-TASTIC: Doc: "Your aim hasn't improved, and neither has your breath."
MEMORABLE MOMENT: When the blue-skinned doctor zaps a purple octopus with his turntable-wristwatch laser gun.
SEQUEL TITLE: *Buckwilin' Rogers*
MORAL OF THE STORY: On an astral plane gone bananas, there *are* no morals.



TITLE: *Dollar* (Power Film & Video)
STARRING: MC Breed, introducing Shannon Greer as Iris
PLOT: Another brother livin' on the edge in pursuit of the Benjamins (don't he know dat neva pays?).
QUOTE-TASTIC: Dollar: "Deuce, he got more issues than *The Source* and VIBE put together!"
MEMORABLE MOMENT: When Dollar and his boys use a waffle iron and a bug zapper to dry out stolen money.
SEQUEL TITLE: *Breed vs. Weed*
MORAL OF THE STORY: Everything you do in the dark eventually comes to light.



TITLE: *The Devil Made Me Do It* (Necro Pictures)
STARRING: Gene Milman, Uncle Howie, Kim Giggles
PLOT: Brooklyn, 1974: Depressed druggie Misha Faybisovich goes to any length to get high and is tortured by some dark-and-lovely babes along the way.
QUOTE-TASTIC: No dialogue, only blaxploitation-style funk music throughout.
MEMORABLE MOMENT: When Faybisovich smooches a honey, only to have her turn into a warty shorty.
SEQUEL TITLE: *Charlie Chaplin: The B-Boy Years*
MORAL OF THE STORY: Even when you're desperate for a smoke, don't sell your soul to the devil.

Adisa Banjoko "The Bishop"

SLANGUISTICS

Breaking down the new SPORTS *language*

From an old-school announcer's most hallowed catchphrase to the new trash being talked on playgrounds this summer, the sporting world is an ever-fertile ground for slanguistic innovation. Word up.

CHEESE: An impossible-to-hit fastball. "Little Rey Ordonez had no chance against Randy Johnson's high cheese."

COOKIES: When the ball is stripped from a player like a cookie stolen from a jar. Used as an exclamation: "Cookies!"

EAT THOSE: To take an opponent's punches as if they are having no effect. "Is that all you got, big guy? I eat those!"

HE'S WIT' US: Phrase for a player who's stinking up the gym so bad he's helping the opposing team. "Don't worry 'bout him. Let him shoot—he's wit' us."

ONION BAG: A soccer net. "[Eduardo] Hurtado launches a rocket into the back of the old onion bag!"

PARATROOPER CLUB: Anyone who leaps into the air when falling for a head or pump fake. "Patrick Ewing is a lifetime member of the paratrooper club." Compare with similar "put him in the popcorn machine," popularized by Lakers announcer Chick Hearn.

POWDER: A shot that hits nothing but net. "When Reggie Miller's on, his J is powder."

SALT IN YOUR GAME: Letting your opponent know he is going to struggle offensively. "Get ready, son, I'm about to put salt in your game."

SATURNINO EFFORT: To hustle like mad, give it all you got; derives from the name of baseball great Saturnino "Minnie" Minoso. "The Expos could still win this game with a saturnino effort in the late innings."

SEVEN-THIRTY: Crazy, outrageous; derives from the hands of a clock, which are straight at 6:00 and crooked at 7:30. "Dennis Rodman is a heck of a Windex man [rebounder], but he's completely seven-thirty."

Al Hawes, Peter Relic, Frank "Nitti" Rivera

WHY 2K?

Sheesh! How many albums are there gonna be with 2000 in the title? Too many and counting.



GRAND PUBA, 2000 (Elektra)
21st-century outlook: A lisping rapper wags his tongue across a variety of subjects, yet remains stubbornly unwilling to perform cunnilingus.



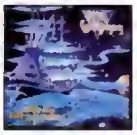
MAC MALL, ILLEGAL BUSINESS? 2000
(Don't Give Up/Young Black Brotha)
21st-century outlook: Escalating white-on-white violence results in stoner dudes reincarnated as fish. Life continues apace for Bay Area ballers "up in this bitch."



GAP BAND, Y2K—FUNKIN' 'TILL 2000 COMZ (Big Trax)
21st-century outlook: Tulsa acknowledged as one of the funkiest cities in the U.S., while Snoop Dogg continues guesting on just about every new album by aging legends.



RAHZEL, MAKE THE MUSIC 2000 (MCA)
21st-century outlook: As the artistic homages pile up, Biz Markie gains his rightful place as one of America's true national treasures.



WENDY CARLOS, SWITCHED-ON BACH 2000 (Telarc)
21st-century outlook: America's greatest transsexual electronic musician repopularizes Johann Sebastian Bach's powdered-wig look.



STYLES OF BEYOND, 2000 FOLD (Bilawn/Hi-Ho)
21st-century outlook: The infamous earthquake epicenter of Northridge, Calif., is matched by this blast of seismic hip hop output from nearby Canoga Park.



REDMAN, DOC'S DA NAME 2000 (Def Jam)
21st-century outlook: All beats, blunts, and booty. Human beings trapped inside a surreal, *Donkey Kong*–like video game.



METHOD MAN, TICAL 2000: JUDGEMENT DAY (Def Jam)
21st-century outlook: Sharp metal teeth all the rage. Earth's atmosphere distinctly redolent of fish.



SUGE KNIGHT REPRESENTS, CHRONIC 2000: STILL SMOKIN' (Death Row)
21st-century outlook: Rife with inferior sound-alikes of your favorite rappers. Guaranteed to burn your high. Better off waiting for Dr. Dre's next *Chronic* offering.



LARRY GRAHAM, GRAHAM CENTRAL STATION 2000 (NPG)
21st-century outlook: The black Captain Stubing guides his funky love boat into many a "safe harbor."

START

B.I.G. DEVELOPMENTS

Police investigation of the murder of the Notorious B.I.G. focuses on Suge Knight; no progress in Tupac Shakur case

On April 20, the Los Angeles Police Department identified imprisoned Death Row Records CEO Marion "Suge" Knight as a key suspect in the March 9, 1997 ambush murder of Bad Boy Entertainment's star rapper, Christopher Wallace, a.k.a. Biggie Smalls. LAPD detectives spent the day searching four Los Angeles–area locations connected to Knight, including Death Row's Beverly Hills headquarters. In addition to confiscating computer equipment from Death Row offices, police seized a metallic purple Chevrolet Impala from a Death Row–owned parking lot next door. The car matches witnesses' descriptions of the vehicle used in the drive-by shooting.

Det. Fred Miller of the LAPD, who had promised last summer that there was "definitely light at the end of the tunnel" of the investigation, says, "[This is] part of the light. But we still haven't arrested anybody. It's a very difficult investigation."

On May 13, Knight, 33, was moved from the California Men's Colony in San Luis Obispo, where he had continued to run Death Row Records via telephone since February 1997, to Mule Creek State Prison in the remote Northern California town of Ione, 400 miles from Los Angeles. Detective Miller asserted that Knight's transfer had "nothing to do with our investigation." A Death Row spokesperson remarked that "Suge's been executive producer of *all* the projects released since he's been in prison."

Despite these developments, details of the search for B.I.G.'s killer remain scarce—including what prompted the LAPD to publicly focus on Knight more than two years after the slaying. "I have no comment on that," says Detective Miller. "We've talked to other agencies, exchanged information from their investigations, and will continue to do so."

Biggie's mother, Voletta Wallace, was working on a posthumous collection of her only child's unreleased music (tentatively scheduled for a summer release on Bad Boy) when she heard about the developments. "I'm very encouraged," she says. "Now I'm waiting for arrests and convictions. I hope that the perpetrator or perpetrators are punished to the full extent of the law."



All eyes on Suge (foreground) in murder of B.I.G.

At the time of B.I.G.'s murder, Knight was already behind bars. He has been in police custody since October 22, 1996 for violating terms of his probation on a 1992 assault conviction. A September 7, 1996 scuffle involving Knight, Tupac Shakur, and Compton-area Crips gang member Orlando Anderson at the Las Vegas MGM Grand Hotel was the probation violation that sent Knight back to prison. A few hours after the altercation, Shakur was shot while riding in the passenger's seat of a car driven by Knight. Shakur died six days later. Anderson, who had repeatedly denied any involvement in Shakur's killing, was shot to death in Compton late last year.

The Las Vegas Police Department says it has found no evidence linking the slayings. "We maintain contact with the people doing the investigating in L.A.," acknowledges Sgt. Kevin Manning, who remains assigned to the Shakur case. "But nothing has come out of their work or ours that is bringing us any closer to resolution of Tupac's killing." *Dave Wielenga*

SUGE KNIGHT: MICHAEL O'NEILL/OUTLINE; B.I.G.: DAVID CORIO/METRA

VIBE confidential

EVERYTHING YOU WANT TO KNOW BEFORE YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO KNOW IT

Dear readers, forgive VC for being in such a rush, but we're absolutely consumed with *the* most urgent sociopolitical issue at hand—what to do for New Year's Eve?! We know of a very prominent producer who's been preparing for the Y2K–worst by stockpiling water and batteries. Then there's the big-willie record exec who's snubbing the St. Bart's scene to hobnob with the Disney World elite. Others are shelling out $1,000 and up to hear **Kool & the Gang** perform "Celebration" ad nauseum at N.Y.C.'s Jacob K. Javits Convention Center, $2,500 to see **Barbra** at the MGM Grand in Vegas, or *even more* to do da butt with **Nelson Mandela** at his 24-hour Cape Town dance party. Now, VC's electronic Wildfire assistant has reservations at all of the above, but we just heard that one of **Madonna**'s eyebrow stylists has refurbished a 1940s rowboat with shearling seats and mahogany oars. For a paltry $2,500, four lucky fashionistas can row from Manhattan to New Jersey to toast the new millennium in scenic Hoboken! VC is *so* there!

Speaking of Madonna, VC has heard that our favorite cultural chameleon has found a way to be ghetto without getting her feet dirty. Madonna and Guy Oseary, head of her Maverick Records, will be producing *Ghetto Superstar*, Fugee **Pras**'s book turned movie, for New Line Cinema! How this project escaped the development-department mail room is beyond us, but *Ghetto Superstar* is now filming in Toronto (a.k.a. Manhattan for Less) with a cast that includes **Vondie Curtis-Hall** (of *Chicago Hope*), Pras (as aspiring rapper Diamond), and Def Jam's newest hotshot, **Ja Rule**. You know that timeless dictum—when the book is good, the movie always sucks? Well, if the opposite holds true, then *Ghetto Superstar* is sure to be amazing!



In other ghetto supastar news, VC hears that since retiring from rap, **Mase** has made peace with former boo **Brandy**. But don't get excited, the two aren't due for a romantic reunion. One high-powered insider told VC that Mase has been spending an ungodly amount of time with *Sister Sister* twins **Tia and Tamera Mowry** ever since they appeared in Harlem World's "I Really Like It" video. In fact, we hear Mase was attending church with the girls when he caught the Holy Ghost and decided to devote his life to the Lord. But is he studying more than the Bible with one of the squeaky-clean teens? That's between them, God, and VC.... But this is all off the record, strictly on the Q.T., and of course, very hush-hush.

ILLUSTRATION BY MEEGAN BARNES

HARD KNOCK NEWS

THE THIN LINE BETWEEN PAPER AND HATE

"It's e thin line between peper and hate," raps Nas on "Hate Me Now," and indeed, paper and hate seem to be ruling the lives of everyone involved with the operatic rap smash.

In August of 1998, aspiring rapper Gevin "Pretty Boy" Marchand, brother of Inga Marchand (a.k.a. Foxy Brown), records vocals on the song "Hate Me Now" produced by D-Moet. D-Moet then records Foxy rapping over the track, complete with its dramatic vocal sample from the 1937 opera *Carmina Burana* by deceased composer Carl Orff. The next time D-Moet hears "Hate Me Now" is on Funkmester Flex's radio show, with Nas's and Puffy Combs's vocals, as recorded by Treckmasters.

When Nas's album *I am...* is released on April 6, 1999 by Columbia Records, "Hate Me Now" 's production is credited to "Pretty Boy and D-Moet


Puff Deddy and Steve Stoute

for Fox 5 Music and to Poke and Tone for Treckmasters Entertainment." The album sells 471,000 copies in its first week. D-Moet, claiming he has not been paid for his writing and production on "Hete Me Now," threatens legal action against Pretty Boy, Columbia, and related parties.

On April 15, the video for "Hate Me Now" debuts on MTV. It includes footage of Puffy saying, "I think I could grow to like this," as he is being nailed to a cross. Puffy, incensed at the inclusion of the crucifixion scene he wanted edited out, barges into the office of Steve Stoute, president of Black Music at Interscope Records—and Nas's maneger—and, with the help of two henchmen, allegedly beats Stoute with a champagne bottle, breaking his arm and jaw. Puffy is subsequently arrested on second-degree assault charges. Stoute tells VIBE, "If [Puffy and I] decide to settle this out of court, it won't have anything to do with money. It'll have to do with him apologizing to me." Stoute then admitted thet Puffy *had* "reached out to apologize," but he didn't return Puff's calls. If convicted on the asseult charge, Puffy feces up to seven years in jail.

MP3 AND THE RECORD INDUSTRY

If you can't ignore 'em, join 'em. The record industry's reticence to take part in the sale of downloadable music over the Internet has quickly dissipated. Sony Music Entertainment's joint venture with Microsoft Corp. will make downloadable singles by artists like Mariah Carey and Ricky Martin available for $3.49, the same as traditional retail prices. MP3.com, Inc.–named after the groundbreaking MP3 technology which lets users download and store audio files of near-digital quality–has entered into a three-year agreement to sell No Limit music over the Internet. Public Enemy has released its first post–Def Jam album, *There's a Poison Going On*, in digitally downloadable a2b and MP3 formats for $8 from Atomic Pop (*www.atomicpop.com*). Also appealing to hip hop heads, the application Virtual Turntables (*www.carrot.probosting.com*) permits users to manipulate MP3 tracks in a DJ mix simulator.

PUFFY AND STEVE STOUTE: HUGH EDWARDS/PPOL



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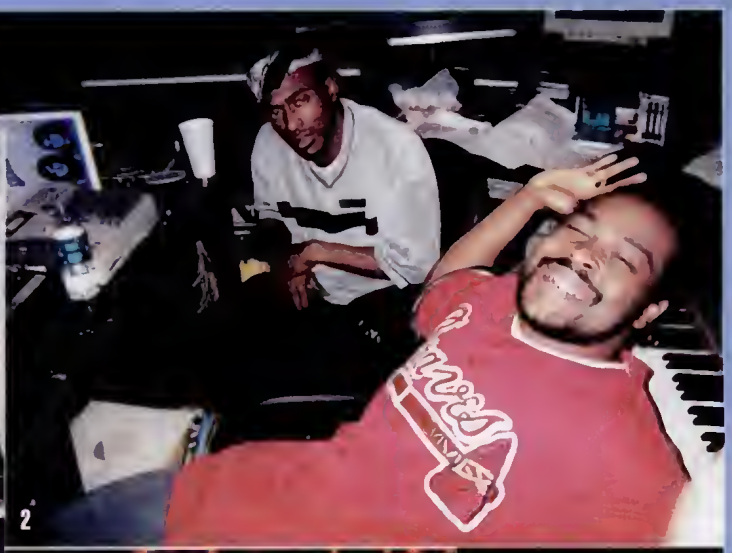
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A DAY IN THE LIFE OF COOL BREEZE


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So you wonder what it's like to walk in a southern gent's shoes? Well, VIBE gave Cool Breeze ("Watch for the Hook") a penny for his thoughts and a disposable cam to take with him on his promo tour around Atlanta, Alabama, North Carolina, and Virginia. It was a tug-of-war getting the Cool One to actually sit down and write his copy, but when he finally did (on two 3"x 5" canary-yellow Post-Its) it was worth the wait. This personal documentation allows us to live vicariously through him—well, for 24 hours anyway.

Kenya N. Byrd

1 Live with Greg Street at V103-FM in Atlanta. We were hyping up the album release party at The Atrium. 2 Cujo (in red shirt) and producer Rico "Goodie" Wade, the Big Boss, hang out with Cool Breeze at The Dungeon [which is also Rico Wade's house/studio]. 3 What you really know about the dirty South? We were driving through Alabama. 4 Hottest item on the shelf, *East Points Greatest Hit* (Interscope), *in* stores *now*! 5 Cool Breeze *and* Kurupt signin' autographs *in* a packed Peppermint Music store *in* ATL. It was the day the album came out, and we sold over a hundred records that day. 6 *Oooh, they got dat butta!* Two girls who posed for me. 7 EJ and Cool Breeze get ready to go to Dothan, Ala. 8 Cool Breeze looking forward to rocking Buzzy's nightclub *in* Dothan. 9 Cool Breeze's DJ, Lucky Calhoun, takes time out to show the camera some love at the Courtyard Hotel In Charlotte, N.C. 10 The coolest cuttas at camp, the Organized Noize Posse—[from left] Pat Brown, Suge, and Ramon Campbell—on their way to do in-store promos in Virgina.

Frederick Calhoun Bell, a.k.a. Cool Breeze

PHOTOGRAPHS BY COOL BREEZE, RAMON CAMPBELL, AND RICO WADE


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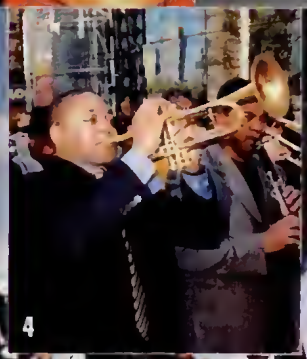
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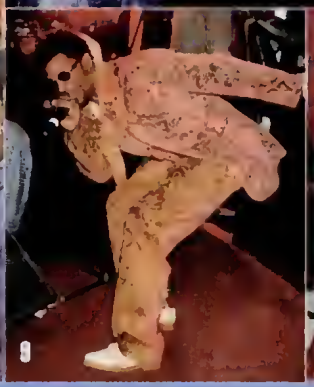

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1 Who says tall brothers can't dance? Sportscaster and former NBA star John Salley shakes what his mama gave him as *The View* cohost Star Jones works him out at VIBEStyle's benefit party for Bethann Hardison. 2 *Let's take it back to the old school*...Kurtis Blow reminds us how it would be if he ruled the world at the VIBEStyle show at N.Y.C.'s Jacob K. Javits Center. 3 Oscar winner Cuba Gooding Jr. may not be the next Tiger Woods, but he holds his own at the Michael Douglas and Friends Celebrity Golf Tournament to benefit the Motion Pictures & Television Fund in California. And how cute is his Giorgio Armani golf-wear? 4 Jazzician Wynton Marsalis celebrated Duke Ellington's 100th birthday by taking the "A" train from 125th Street in Harlem to 59th Street in Columbus Circle, and marching through the streets to Lincoln Center. 5 Legendary pop queen Cher asks Hollywood's cutest couple—Will Smith and Jada Pinkett-Smith—if they *believe* in love at the World Music Awards in Monte Carlo. 6 Doesn't Janet Jackson look absolutely flawless at the Awards? We *love* this white ensemble! 7 Maxwell makes sure *Party of Five* star Scott Wolf doesn't sleep on his boxing skills at a launch party for the new 'zine *Nylon* at Manhattan's B Bar & Grill. 8 It's been four years since Silk's last album, and they're still freakin' the honies with their new joint, "If You." They're chilling at Cameo Theater in Miami's South Beach during the Impact Conference. 9 Bounty Killer is wicked, mon! He brings da riddim to the floor as he rocks "I Can't Believe Mi Eyes" at a G. City Inc. show in New Jersey's Terrace Ballroom. 10 *Money, power, respect is what you need in life*...and Camille O. Cosby, Ruby Dee, Hillary Rodham Clinton, Diahann Carroll, and Dorothy Height have them all. The ladies chitchat at a reception in the White House given by the First Lady for the CBS TV flick *Having Our Say: The Delany Sisters' First 100 Years*. *K.N.B.*

PHOTOGRAPHS BY: (1) JOHNNY NUNEZ, (2) MARTIN REED, (3) COURTESY OF [illegible] PATRICK MCMULLAN, (4) JAY LASH, (5) MARLON "JUMAA" MYRIE, (10) SHARON FARMER/WHITE HOUSE PHOTO OFFICE

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In 1966, in the face of widespread police brutality against Oakland's black community, a small group of young brothers formed the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense. Armed with shotguns, notebooks, and knowledge of California State law, they set about taking down badge numbers of abusive officers.

In their most notorious act, the Panthers entered the California State Capitol, fully—and legally—armed, to protest a proposed bill that prohibited the carrying of loaded firearms in public places. Sporting revolutionary-chic berets, the unremittingly militant Panthers captured the attention of progressive youth nationwide.

When Panther leader Huey P. Newton was jailed in 1968 on murder charges after a police shootout, Party cofounder and chairman Bobby Seale continued to expand the Party's coalition politics. As the Panthers' power waned in the '70s, Seale ran for mayor of Oakland in 1973 (and received 44,000 votes). While serving as a community liaison at Temple University in the mid-'80s, Seale published Barbeque'n With Bobby Seale *(Ten Speed Press).*

*Today, Seale lectures at 40 college campuses a year and maintains his superb website (*www.bobbyqueseale.com*). VIBE caught up with the gregarious, up-at-4 a.m., "old cripple-foot revolutionary humanist" in downtown Oakland, where he's working on former Party member David Hilliard's run for Oakland City Council. In Seale's rented Ford Taurus, the scent of spilled liquid hickory mingled with Seale's thoughts on how to apply '60s ideals to millennial reality and bring—as the Panthers used to say—power to the people.*

STILL WALKING LIKE A PANTHER

Bobby Seale
as told to Jay Babcock



February 1968: Seale speaks outside Berkeley County Courthouse

START

In 1962, after spending time in the Air Force and working on the Gemini Missile Program, I went to Merritt College in Oakland. I was originally an engineering design major, [but as] I began to realize that I had to try to end institutionalized racism in America, I shifted to political, social, and behavioral sciences.

I remember the day Malcolm X died. That night I went up into the Berkeley Hills to get myself together. I said to myself, "To hell with it, I'll just try to make a Malcolm X out of my own self. I'm gonna be dedicated to this human liberation struggle to turn this backwards racist world around."

A year and a half later, in October 1966, Huey Newton and I wrote the first draft of the Black Panther Party program. We vowed to defend ourselves against police brutality, to organize people to get electoral power. This was *not* rhetoric. With over 40 chapters and branches across the U.S., we put together a free ambulance program, a health clinic with a free pharmacy, and a free breakfast-for-children program. Running for office was always part of the Party. In 1968 [minister of information] Eldridge Cleaver was slated as a presidential candidate. [At its peak] in January 1969, the Party had 5,000 active members. We were circulating close to 200,000 copies of the Party newspaper every week by mid-1969.

We were *all* power to *all* the people. The Black Panther Party [formed coalitions] with any ethnic group progressive enough to relate. We didn't pick up guns 'cause we hated white people! In fact, police shot and killed some of my white radical buddies. [Party members] weren't the only ones getting shot, although we were the focal point of the FBI and police. The Black Panther Party used to have rallies in Oakland where we would sell 3,000 barbecue dinners. I was always a troop feeder. I was chairman *and* head cook. They held central committee meetings in the kitchen while I'd be smothering down a hundred pork chops or making an eight-gallon pot of hickory sirloin chili.

My uncle taught me to barbecue in Liberty, Tex., when I was 12 years old. He'd say,

"The Black Panther Party held central committee meetings in the kitchen while I'd be smothering down a hundred pork chops."

"Bobby, boy, dis heah is some really good *Bobbyque*!" I'm planning to expand my first cookbook into a CD-ROM. On a 14-pound turkey I put a little bit of hickory, a little bit of Worcestershire, and a whole quart of cranberry juice. Take that turkey sitting in a plastic bag and twist-tie it so that the marinade will come all up around the turkey, and sit it in a high-rim pan in the refrigerator overnight, marinating. Put that turkey on the pit in a small shaving pan and baste it with that same marinade. Mmmh!

With this new version of the cookbook, I hope to raise $10 million for a new project putting youths to work renovating old houses and cars. We could create 2 [million] or 3 million jobs this way across the country. I'm 62 and I'm still active. I don't give a damn if you're an engineer, a writer, or if you're just roaming this earth to try and find out what it's about. Make some contribution on one level or another.

I would love to take a room full of rap artists on a retreat for three days and give them some nitty-gritty political education. Your art—that's one thing. But rappin' ain't the only thing that's in your interest. Take 5 percent of your time out, work to unify people in opposition to the avariciousness and racism in the political institutions of America.



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ROGER TROUTMAN, 1951–1999

Fans of old-school funk and new-school hip hop lost a legend on April 25 with the death of Roger Troutman in his hometown, Dayton, Ohio. As a solo artist and as the leader of electro-boogie pioneers Zapp, Troutman recorded such hits as "More Bounce to the Ounce–Part I," "Computer Love," and "Doo Wa Ditty (Blow That Thing)"–tracks that later became bedrock samples in songs by EPMD, the Notorious B.I.G., and virtually every L.A. gangsta rapper.

Troutman, 47, was killed by his brother and former business manager, Larry, 54, who then turned his .357 Magnum on himself.

While rumors of tension between the brothers have surfaced, no motive has been established for the murder-suicide. According to Dayton police homicide Sgt. Gary White, relatives said that "they had no reason to believe there was any problem between Roger and Larry Troutman, either business, family, or personal."

After his string of body-slamming singles in the '80s, Troutman's music was embraced by rappers and producers who had grown up as Zapp fans, especially on the West Coast. (On 1988's "Act a Fool," King Tee rhymed, "Get in my car, roll up my tinted glass / Look for my Zapp tape to pop in my dash.") Troutman recorded with Snoop Dogg, guested on Tupac and Dr. Dre's Grammy-nominated 1996 smash, "California Love," and had recently been in the studio with Kool Keith.

A funeral for the Troutman brothers, held on May 1, was attended by more than 4,000 people and was capped by their nephew Rufus's performance of "Amazing Grace" sung through Roger's signature Vocoder voice box. *Alan Light*

A well-used sample stands as a powerful tribute in itself. Here, four of the many artists who've worked the Zapp classic, "More Bounce to the Ounce–Part I," into their own music speak out on Roger Troutman's tragic death.

SNOOP DOGG
Song: "Snoop Bounce" —Snoop Doggy Dogg (Death Row, 1996)

"I personally knew Roger, and he meant a whole lot to me. I'm still hurting right now. I'm moving in slow-motion. When I hear his songs, it reminds of riding my bike to football practice in '82 and hearing his music on the streets. We used to chill all the time. We did a remix together of 'Beware of My Crew' from my group the L.B.C. Crew (Warner Bros., 1995). And we did about three or four jam sessions that he taped on his little video camera. He deserves all the props in the world. He was a living legend. And while he's not here no more, we're gonna continue to push what he put down."

ERICK SERMON
Song: "You Gots to Chill"—EPMD (Fresh, 1988)

"I'm really upset by the news. Roger was responsible for the idea behind one of our biggest songs. He definitely played a big part in EPMD's style on the production tip, and [his death] is a great loss to the music world."

EASY MO BEE (PRODUCER)
Song: "Going Back to Cali" —the Notorious B.I.G. (Bad Boy, 1997)

"I just met Roger Troutman three weeks ago. We were talking about remixing some of his Zapp material. He also wanted to re-create a Kirk Franklin–style version of 'Oh Happy Day' for an upcoming album. He contacted me because he liked 'Going Back to Cali,' the version I produced on Biggie's last album that sampled 'More Bounce to the Ounce.' He was really open to sharing ideas and was very cooperative. I was looking forward to working with him."

WC
Song: "Pay Ya Dues"—Low Profile (Priority, 1989)

"I just got in the studio at, like, four in the morning, and my brother came in and told me 'Roger's dead!' A few hours later, I called a radio station and they confirmed it for me. It hurts, man, to lose someone that you grew up listening to from day one. But also, as an artist, to see how talent could just go to waste over whatever. It wasn't like he was out of commission or couldn't perform, Roger could still get down. If anybody ever seen a Roger Troutman show they know that he was one of the most talented performers.

Me and Roger were straight. He was straight into the funk, so he would give props to many rap groups. He wasn't one of those type of artists that would be like, 'Oh, you can't [sample] my record because I don't like the way you used it.' He knew that we was paying tribute to what he was doing and giving back. This is like a blow to every gangsta rapper in America."

Reported by Elliott Wilson



Forever golden: Troutman circa 1985

NICK VAN ORMAN/LONDON FEATURES

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"The static was so strong, it drowned out Emma. Mister, whatever can do that ain't human."



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THE VIBE SPOT

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Photos by: (1, 3-11) Johnny Nunez; (2) Courtesy of VIBEstyle

1. Hangin' out at Twirl are Gary Lewis (l-r), director of business development, and Leroy Ebanks, associate brand manager for Miller Genuine Draft.

2. Making his way down the catwalk, actor Malik Yoba is on the prowl at the VIBEstyle Fashion Showcase.

3. Just doin' it at Carbon are (l-r): Matt Pressman, associate publisher; Mike Parker, product line manager basketball apparel, Nike; Astor Chambers, music marketing representative, Nike; and Mimi Valdez, editor-in-chief, Blaze Magazine.

4. In search of beauty, L'Oréal Féria enlists VIBE partygoers to enter the "Color Me Cool" contest.

5. Excited after receiving her new Féria Color, Tiffany Britt (l), one of the L'Oréal Féria contest winners, got her makeover at the L'Oréal Tech Center, while Jennifer Greenway, marketing manager, L'Oréal Féria, looked on.

6. L'Oréal Féria contest winners Tiffany (second from left), Tracy Banfo (c), and Victoria Harper (far right) show off their new Féria Color and clothes courtesy of Guess? They are pictured here with Jennifer Greenway (far left), and Janine Green (second from right), L'Oréal Féria spokesmodel.

7. Danyel Smith, editor-in-chief, presents checks to nonprofit organizations Career Gear (l) and Dress for Success New York (r) for their help in assisting those in adverse circumstances obtain business clothing for job interviews.

8. Showing much flavor at the VIBEstyle Set Awards (l-r), Carolyn Ellison, senior brand manager of Tanqueray; Gary Lewis; Ananda Lewis, host of MTV; and Noel Hankin, v.p. of corporate affairs, Schieffelin & Somerset.

9. Danyel Smith (l) presents the first VIBEstyle Props Award to BethAnn Hardison (r) for her incredible work in the fashion and entertainment industries.

10. Ladies of style Trina and Tamara perform for attendees at the VIBEstyle Set.

11. Star Jones (l), host of *The View*, and supermodel Tyson Beckford (r) were just a few of the celebrities in the house to congratulate BethAnn Hardison.


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LIL' CEASE Big-time fun

PHOTOGRAPHED BY CLANG APRIL 23, 1999, GRAMERCY PARK, NEW YORK CITY

[illegible] Wonka's fortress of [illegible]'s debut solo [illegible] *World of Cease* [illegible] is [illegible] a gun [illegible] real up-[illegible] niggas know there's more to [illegible] than the hard shit."

James "Lil' Cease" Lloyd, 21, [illegible] a thing or two about hard times. After witnessing the 1997 slaying of his best friend and mentor, the Notorious B.I.G., Lil' Cease all but disappeared from the rap game. The murder was more than he could handle. It set Cease back both spiritually and careerwise. Up until that point he'd established himself as more than [illegible]'s sidekick, heating up hits like [illegible] M.A.F.I.A.'s 1995 "Player's [illegible] lovesable duet with Lil' [illegible] [illegible] solo stable enough to record again, even more obstacles had popped up. "After B.I.G. passed, a lot of the paperwork from the labels got messed up," says Cease, who was snatched up for the *Ready to Die* tour by B.I.G. when Cease was just 15. "I was like, 'I'm not doing no album till I learn the business and understand what I need to know,'" he says. And learn the business he did. Lil' Cease's long-awaited disc, featuring the likes of Redman and Jay-Z, is the first to be released on Lil' Kim's Queen Bee label. And with songs like the bubbly "Work It Out," Cease leaves his darker days behind: "That thug shit played out like Jheri curls / For me it's a better world / And mo' betta girls."

Despite ominous skies looming outside the downtown studio, Lil' Cease is still smiling. "Nigga's just trying to see the good part of life," he says. "That's why my album is on some old 'Grab your blunt, get your liquor, and let's have some fun shit." We wouldn't have it any other way, Cease. It's a wonderful world, indeed. *Zhou Dao-Yi*



NEXT PEOPLE ON THE RISE





NEXT
PEOPLE ON THE VERGE

MACY GRAY Sweet surrender

PHOTOGRAPH BY STEPHANE SEDNAOUI

It's okay," says Macy Gray to a jaded audience at Los Angeles' infamous Viper Room, "to smile."

With Freestyle Fellowship's DJ Kiilu, fierce backup singers, and a 13-piece band, Gray's setup is stacked like a modern-day Sly & the Family Stone. Gray launches into her sultry first single, "Do Something," from her debut album, *On How Life Is* (Epic), and even the most blasé Angelinos are compelled to burn up the dance floor in affirmation of the undeniable. With Bob Marley–style scansion and a voice reminiscent of both Lady Day and Tina Turner, Macy Gray *moves* them.

Days later, inside her unpretentious, toy-filled digs in the Valley, Grey, 29, tends to her three precious babies (Aanisah, 4; Mel, 3; and Happy, 1), and is arranging a rehearsal for later that day. "I love *all* music," she says when asked to describe her intoxicating sound, "and I think it shows in mine." The Canton, Ohio native relishes people's inability to categorize her unique style. "People still love hearing things that push the envelope and inspire them to do something new," she says. The singer incorporates everything from reggae to hip hop to rock in her delicious brand of homegrown soul.

Eight years ago, Gray was a student in USC's screenwriting program. Then, a favor she did—penning lyrics for a musician friend—unexpectedly opened the doors to a singing career. "When it came time to record the song," she explains, "the singer didn't show up. So I sang instead." In 1998 she landed her current deal with Epic, and although Gray is happy there, she's also acutely aware of the challenges facing black singers who don't fit into the standard R&B mold. "There's so much out there," she says, "and if you listen to something just because I'm black—or because I'm white—you're cheating yourself."

But still, she refuses to focus on the possible downside. "I made the best record I could," Gray says, flashing her gorgeous smile. "This is *my* thing." And with her 100-degree career in motion, Macy Gray is like mercury rising.

Martine Bury



NEXT
PEOPLE ON THE VERGE

J.T. MONEY Player's paradise

PHOTOGRAPHED BY JANE HUNTINGTON APRIL 16, 1999, WASHINGTON, D.C.

Inside Washington, D.C.'s Renaissance Hotel on a warm Friday night last April, rap star J.T. Money finally gets to chill after a full day promoting his aptly titled solo debut, *Pimpin' on Wax* (Freeworld/Priority). "I ain't never been on BET, MTV, and on the radio all day," Money says right before swallowing a double shot of Hennessy. Life on the road may take a lot out of the rapper, but touring and talking to the press obviously beats pounding the pavement in search of the perfect record deal. Money understands this better than anyone.

As lead rapper and founding member of Miami's Poison Clan, Jeff "J.T. Money" Thompkins, 26, wrote some of the biggest club classics to creep out of the South. Songs like 1992's "Shake Whatcha Mama Gave Ya'" and 1991's "Dance All Night" were huge hits for Poison Clan, but Money believes Luke received too much credit for the popularity of these songs. "I was putting the only raw records on Luke's label," Money says, having learned firsthand the definition of the music industry's cool jerk. "I came in the game young. I didn't know *nothing*." The Clan released three albums on Uncle Luke's defunct Luke Skywalker Records before disbanding.

Money relocated to Atlanta in 1998 and signed a short-lived deal with LaFace before finding emancipation later that year with Dallas Austin's Freeworld Entertainment. Throwing himself back into action with "Who Dat?," his bananas first single (featuring Solé), Money shows the world once and for all just how tight his game is. With bumping tracks like "Playa Ass Shit," "Ho Problems," and the hilarious "Pimp Matrimony" interlude, *Pimpin'* is the definitive pimp manifesto.

Money isn't surprised by his newfound success, but he's learned to take the money and fame in stride. "I took this ride before," he says in his gravelly baritone. "It's like I was riding in the kiddie park before and now I'm in the *big* one." For some, rapping is a mere meal ticket. For others, like J.T. Money, it's a calling.

Charisse Nikole




Lines 15 39

NEXT
PEOPLE ON THE VERGE



Trina (left) and Tamara

TRINA & TAMARA

Sisters with voices

PHOTOGRAPH BY LAURIE STEIRER

In our songs, we try to say what hasn't been said," says Trina Powell, the flirtatious half of twentysomething sister duo Trina and Tamara. Over brunch at Manhattan's B Bar & Grill, the sisters discuss their mesmerizing self-titled debut (Columbia), trade inside jokes, and of course, talk men. The Powells are definitely *not* afraid to speak their minds when it comes to the brothers. On "What'd You Come Here For?," their first single, they chastise guys who only wanna style and profile. "It's funny. A lot of [women] are now coming out with songs like these," says Trina, who wrote eight of the disc's 10 tracks with baby sis Tamara. "I guess we're just mad now."

But please don't mistake these otherwise sugar-and-spice girls for bitter women. They're as sweet as their vocal harmonies, skills honed during their musical upbringing in Gary, Ind. "Our momma used to *saang*," boasts Trina, who got her start performing in local talent shows with her older brother—soul singer Jesse Powell—as Little Jesse and Katrina. Once Tamara and younger brother Jacob were old enough, their mom formed Sheer Joy, a family group á la Gary legends the Jackson 5. "When I was little," admits Tamara, "I used to think that everyone could sing, because everyone in my family could sing...except my daddy."

In 1991, the Powell sisters moved to Los Angeles where, between them, they paid dues by singing backup and writing songs for such artists as Brandy, Adina Howard, and Deborah Cox. But their big break came in 1997 after they laid down vocals for Somethin' for the People's sleeper hit, "My Love Is the Shhh!" "We thought it was just gonna be a demo," Trina says, still amazed. "I didn't even know the *words*, but they kept our vocals." The platinum single left record-company executives craving more, and the duo was signed to Columbia later that year.

"When we were younger, we used to joke about making it," says Tamara, giggling. "We *never* thought it would really happen." Stand back, because T'n'T are about to explode.

Tracy E. Hopkins



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THE VIBE SPOT 2

Whether it's album releases, battling DJs, or parties and panels, VIBE is on the spot! Check us out...



1. Adding a little flavor to the Super Bowl, VIBE, MGD, and comedian Joe Torre were in Miami in full force.

2. After hittin' the 1 & 2's, Biz Markie hangs out with Denver Bronco Neil Smith.

3. Out in Atlanta, Marian Ensley (second from right), west coast music sales and marketing director, Eric Sermon (l) of EPMD; Jheryl Busby (second from left), head of urban music, Dreamworks; and guest are on hand to celebrate the release of David Hollister's (c) new project on the Dreamworks record label.

4. DJ Rukus shows off his skills as he battles for the title at the VIBE DJ Battle for World Dominance, sponsored by Loud Records.

5. Roli Rho was representin' again this year as he won, for the second year in a row, the VIBE DJ Battle for World Dominance. Lugz by NY Lug Company sponsored the event.

6. Taking time out from partying at the VIBE Music Seminar Sunday night soiree at Twirl, (l-r) David Manning, account director, Marketing Corporation of America; Ronda Plummer, v.p. of marketing, Salem; Bob Elmer, assistant marketing manager, Salem; and attendee Amy Eisenberg say "cheese" for the camera.

7. After a day of VIBE Music Seminar panels, Leroy Ebanks (l), associate brand manager for Miller Genuine Draft, and Jaime Sharper (r) of the Baltimore Ravens enjoy themselves at Twirl.

8. Kickin' off VIBE Music Seminar and VIBEstyle at Carbon are Junny Hibbert (c), corporate accounts manager, Sybil Chester (r), manager of corporate affairs, Schieffelin & Somerset; and Claudette Griffith (l).

9. The Producer's Lab was one of the hottest panels at VIBE Music Seminar with (l-r) Ronald Lawrence of the Hit Men, Harry Allen, panel moderator, Kenny Gamble, Philadelphia International; Prince Paul, Prince Paul Productions; and RZA, Razor Sharp Records, layin' it down for all those in attendance.

Photos by: (1-2) A-Gort; (3) Arnold Turner; (4-5,6-9) Johnny Nunez


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AGE 26
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HITTIN' SKINS: Jennifer is bangin'.
PHOTOGRAPHED BY FIROOZ ZAHEDI MARCH 15, 1999, CULVER CITY, CALIFORNIA
SILVER HALTER SWIMSUIT BY EMPORIO ARMANI. DIAMOND EARRINGS

BOOMIN' SYSTEM

DANCING. ACTING. SINGING. BUTT-KICKING.

BOMBSHELL SUPREME JENNIFER LOPEZ IS THE BIGGEST EXPLOSION OUTTA THE BRONX SINCE THE BIRTH OF HIP HOP.

DREAM HAMPTON FINDS OUT WHY HOLLYWOOD'S HOTTEST HOTTIE IS JUST A ROUND-THE-WAY GIRL AT HEART.

She is the kind of intoxicating pretty we could stare at for the next century or so. She has a celebrated, strong dancer's body, and white America has discovered in her the beauty of the Big Butt. If celebrity is this country's religion then Jennifer Lopez has, in the past two years, emerged a most seductive deity. She is a mammoth star who has yet to make a blockbuster. She has consistently offered nuanced, pitch-perfect performances opposite such heavyweight actors as Nick Nolte, Sean Penn, and Jack Nicholson. In June, she dropped her The Work Group/ Sony debut, *On the 6* (in homage to the Bronx-bound No. 6 subway train that took her home to her Castle Hill neighborhood), a mélange of Latin grooves, hip hop, and dance pop.

As much as people want to get to know celebrities, Jennifer Lopez assures me, "They never will." Lopez is doing a good job working her chopsticks in the West Hollywood health-food bistro she's chosen for our meeting. And it's a good thing—every customer in the joint is watching her eat while they pretend not to watch her eat. "You can't let people in that much," she says, "'cause what do you have left for you?" Losing privacy, negotiating celebrity, learning exactly what to say in interviews and how to be in public are part of the star package that one cannot be prepared for. They are the hard lessons Jennifer Lopez has been learning lately.

"When I first started doing television years ago, it was like nobody cared. I was very open and free. Then you become famous and people care about every little thing you do, every aspect of your life. They become intrigued, I guess." She shrugs her shoulders then gives the couple next to us a closed-mouth smile while she chews her broccoli.

"They want to know who you are. It's flattering at first…"

Here's what you already may have read about Jennifer Lopez (let's just get this out of the way): She's been known to do interviews in bathrobes and diamond crosses. She reportedly married Ojani Noa after a whirlwind romance (they met at a restaurant where he was a waiter while Lopez was shooting *Blood and Wine* [20th Century Fox, 1997]), then they divorced quickly and quietly in 1998. She's been spotted poolside in Palm Beach with Puff Daddy, in Paris with Puff Daddy, at a Miramax after-Oscars bash with Puff Daddy. (Lopez on Puff: "Friends." Puff on Lopez: "I swear to God, my name better not even be in honey's article.") She is a 21st-century, unstoppable screen queen. Her favorite flick ever is *West Side Story* (United Artists, 1961).

Lopez has joined the upper echelon of sensational celebrities (think Julia Roberts) whose every grocery-store purchase requires documentation. But alas, it is a conundrum that doesn't evoke much sympathy. First of all, most people don't just become famous. They work very hard at it. They show up on red carpets wearing Valentino or Badgley Mischka body-clingers (or tulle, jeweled princess numbers). They steal the scene from blonder, more "luminous" award winners. They pose on magazine covers topless—or close to it—legs apart, or better yet, with their backs to the cameras.

"Yeah," says Lopez, and then, jacking a quote from another celebrity, says, "Never complain, never explain."

What's interesting about Lopez is that even as she embodies what being a glamorous Hollywood star is all about, she is so *not*. First of all, she's all Castle Hill. When her label mate and friend Marc Anthony, the Spanish Harlem Latin singing sensation, hits her on her cell, she's all "What's up, nigga?" She may rock Fred Leighton on Oscar night, but on Tuesdays she's all baguette cluster creations by Jacob the Jeweler in midtown Manhattan (he who designs icy baubles for your favorite rap stars). She pushes a drop-top platinum Benz, which is equal parts ghetto fabulous and Hollywood hot thing. But make no mistake, she'll roll down her window and curse you out if you: a) cut her off, b) even look like you're gonna tap her whip, or c) don't let her over two lanes to make a left from the right lane.

She is indeed an ambitious one-woman franchise—a certified film star, an emerging pop-music princess, and you, include other actresses or Hollywood types, starts complaining in jest about last night's date—"Girl, I'm ovulating, he could've got it but he's frontin' 'cause I went out once with his roommate"—Lopez, jokingly, is all "Girl, send him my way. He's a hottie." Her way would be a top-floor West Hollywood apartment. Her bedroom is this all-white, willowy shrine draped with gauzy material. She is, and I'm surprised to learn this given her press, a real girl's girl. The kind of loyal, down-for-whatever girlfriend—"Who wants to go to Miami Friday night? I need a tan for the Oscars!"—that we're all better for having on our team.

"My everyday thing is so nothing," Lopez says apologetically, as she weaves in and out of traffic in between appointments. "If me and my girls go out for dinner, that's a big deal. We're all calling each other all day like, 'What are you gonna wear? Where should we go? Who's driving?'"

Indeed, a day with Ms. Lopez is hardly Page Six material, but it does confirm her reputation as a hard-working self-invention. There's dance rehearsal for her upcoming music video with Janet Jackson's choreographer, Tina Landon. Meetings at Sony—the art department needs her approval on the album artwork. All day long there are conference calls with management and label execs about the first single. The Puff-produced "Feelin' So Good" with Fat Joe and Big Pun is *caliente*, hot,

"I CAN'T TRY TO BE WHITNEY OR FAITH," LOPEZ SAYS. "I HAVE SOMETHING ELSE TO OFFER TO ANYBODY WHO'LL WANT TO GET DOWN."





a high-priced pitchwoman for L'Oréal—yet she is decidedly free of an entourage (except for her personal assistant, Arlene, who's also her best friend from the Bronx since she was seven). And the two of them are all "You are so retarded" to each other all day long. She greets you—even though you're a reporter, and whoa is she skeptical of the whole "media" thing—with a warm "Hi, Mommy!" and a hug. Her body is smaller and her face is softer than in photographs. Makeup is all about a little lip gloss, and that's it.

When Shawn, part of her extended L.A. homegirl crew that does not, thank hot. But the sweet "If You Had My Love" is equally upbeat, and the vocals are strong. She'll poll anyone with ears for their opinion, but it's clear the last word will be hers. In cream sweats and a matching Tommy Hilfiger sweater she's no less sexy than she is in a backless, mesh Versace gown. It's just that in Air Maxes she can move a lot faster.

Making an album has meant putting her film career on hold for at least a year. The last movie she did was *Out of Sight* (Universal, 1998). "This album was exciting and scary to make," she says. "With every script I read I'm like, Is this gonna stretch me? Is it gonna make me a little crazy? 'Cause if it is then I'm doing the right thing. That's how it was with the album. It was a lot of work. I can't try to be Whitney or Faith. I do something different, I have something else to offer to anybody who'll want to, you know, fucking get down."

"When I heard she was coming

WOOL AND LACE BIKINI BY GIANNI VERSACE. WOMEN'S DIAMOND EARRINGS BY HARRY WINSTON



Jennifer is nice.

out," says rapper Fat Joe, via phone, of Lopez's recorded material, "I was like, Jennifer Lopez? Maybe she's getting [a record deal] on the strength [of who she is]. But," he says firmly, "she could *sing*. I think it's gonna blow up. I don't know if [she's] like Mariah Carey, but I think she could sell some mills."

"Jennifer represents all the things that we [Latinos] are: beautiful, voluptuous, intelligent, proud," chimes rapper Big Pun. "When I was young, she used to do plays at the Kips Bay Boys & Girls Club. Always acting and dancing. She was doing something right."

Occupying a position in the constellation is about timing and capturing the collective popular imagination as much as it's about sheer will. Jennifer Lopez is immensely talented at a time when the Spanish-speaking population is expanding at an exponential rate. Slowly, Latin actors like Antonio Banderas and Salma Hayek and singers like Shakira, Marc Anthony, and bringin'-down-the-house-on-Grammy-night Ricky Martin are making their way into the pop lexicon. These stars shine without being asked to sacrifice too much of their culture the way a Rita Moreno or Margarita Carmen Cansino (a.k.a. Rita Hayworth) had to do, or acting as ambassadors/caricatures like a Lucy-loving Ricky Ricardo.

In her film career she's played an Italian (*Out of Sight*), a Native-American (*U Turn*, Sony, 1997), a Chicana (*Selena*, Warner Bros., 1997), and a Cuban (*Blood and Wine*). But radio programming is possibly the last frontier to be diversified, and it's not as flexible. Sony has simultaneously released two singles from *On the 6*: "If You Had My Love" and "No Me Ames," a Spanish ballad with Marc Anthony.

"Unfortunately, it's very segregated," says her label copresident, Jeff Ayeroff, of radio programming. "But we're marketing this as a pop album by a major diva, which is what it is."

Growing up in a working-class section of the Bronx during hip hop's first days, Lopez's musical memories are mixed. "The hot shit was the Sugarhill Gang," she recalls. "We were really into hip hop. And on the holidays and at home I'd have salsa and merengue with my family. At school it was R&B and pop and hip hop again. Hip hop was a big influence in my life. But salsa is what gets me going. It's what I put on around the house."

Her big showbiz break came when she won an audition to be a Fly Girl on Keenan Ivory Wayans's *In Living Color* back in 1990. "That was a real break for me, I mean I moved away from New York. I was on my own, I was independent." Then came an audition for the Janet Jackson tour. René Elizondo Jr., Jackson's then boo, and Jackson loved her. But the weekend before the tour was about to start, she called Elizondo and told him she won a role in an upcoming pilot, CBS's *South Central*. She couldn't begin the tour, but she was killed after only one season.)

It was her showing in *Selena* that made Lopez bankable, raising her per-movie salary to a reported $2 million mark. She says her vulnerable performance of the slain Tejáno star is her favorite. But it's in smaller, darker films that she has developed range and depth. In *Blood and Wine*, a noir suspense drama starring Jack Nicholson, Lopez transformed what could




Fly Girl on the set (second from right), 1993


Puff's "Been Around the World" video, 1997

"JENNIFER REPRESENTS ALL THE THINGS THAT WE [LATINOS] ARE: BEAUTIFUL, VOLUPTUOUS, INTELLIGENT, PROUD," SAYS BIG PUN.

hoped to join them on the road later. Elizondo told her she had to make a choice, and for Lopez there wasn't one.

"The Janet tour is a major job for a dancer. It's a year and a half of work," says Landon, Lopez's dance coach for the day. "But she knew. Other dancers, they say they want to do this and that, but they never leave [dancing]. Jennifer was just certain."

"I would have just died if I didn't go for it," Lopez says of the television spot. "I would have literally died." (The show have been a marginal, stereotypically hot-blooded character into a complicated, unpredictable woman with real purpose.

As Grace, the fated, deeply damaged female lead in Oliver Stone's *U Turn*, Lopez faced an emotional dilemma. She didn't want to travel the dark, twisted road taken by her character. She found herself panicking the night before a major shoot. "I have the most wonderful father, youknowwhatimean? I didn't want to think about fathers molesting their daughters or killing their wives," she says. "I had to call my acting coach and he faxed me this article on Meryl Streep, where she was talking about going to difficult places. It's about not being afraid to go there. And at the end of the day it's a job. I'm getting paid to go there."

And then there is her body. Her butt, in particular, has overshadowed her formidable acting ability. It is written about, photographed lovingly (with her cooperation, of course). It is used as an example, in teen mags for girls and grown women's fashion tomes, of a changing body ideal.

"I know," she says. "It's like this whole other person." Mind you, she has a very healthy, "I look at it in a positive way...women out there who are shaped like me are not ashamed of it 'cause I'm representin'" kind of attitude about the whole thing. Women like her—namely black women—haven't exactly had issues of shame when it comes to that particular body part. In most sectors of our community, the bigger the better.

Positive attitude aside, the objectification of Ms. Lopez's most beautiful body part has everything to do with white America's gaze on ethnic bodies. It is almost cliché to fetishize the hypermasculine, topless black male body (usually drenched in sweat from the hard labor, you see) of a Michael Jordan or a Tupac Shakur or a D'Angelo. The objectification of black (and brown)

HIGH SCHOOL PHOTO: SETH POPPEL YEARBOOK ARCHIVES. *IN LIVING COLOR* COURTESY OF FOX. PUFF DADDY VIDEO: ARNOLD TURNER

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ANATOMY OF A STAR

By Stephan Talty

When Jennifer Lopez flaunted her stunning backside in *Out of Sight*, Hollywood erupted in celebration of her mouth-watering curves. Reviewers raved about Lopez's "God-given ass" and her "unflappable ripeness" as if she were the first woman with junk in her trunk. Don't these people ever get uptown? To see what other assets Lopez has worked in her quick climb to stardom, peep the rest of her robust body of work.



FILM: *Mi Familia* (New Line, 1995)
FEATURED ASSET: Heart
Lopez leaves her Fly Girl past behind with a small but evocative role in this sprawling Latino melodrama.



FILM: *Money Train* (Columbia, 1995)
FEATURED ASSET: *Crica*
Her first big film role and she's got both Wesley Snipes and Woody Harrelson lusting after her. Hollywood quickly realizes, *Boys dig this girl!*



FILM: *Jack* (Buena Vista, 1996)
FEATURED ASSET: Teeth
Good news: Lopez lands a gig in a Francis Ford Coppola flick. Bad news: It's the god-awful *Jack*. In the role of Robin Williams's smiling teacher, all Lopez can do is grin (often) and bear it.



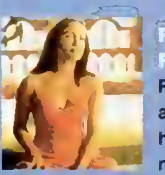
FILM: *Blood and Wine* (20th Century Fox, 1997)
FEATURED ASSET: Brain
When you're going up against Jack Nicholson in a complex drama directed by the legendary Bob Rafelson (*Five Easy Pieces*, Columbia, 1970), you'd better have your wits about you. A smooth Lopez proves she can hold her own alongside Hollywood institutions.



FILM: *Selena* (Warner Bros., 1997)
FEATURED ASSET: Eyebrows
Lopez padded her booty to play the Tex-Mex Madonna, Selena. But the real story is her ink-black eyebrows, which made her look like a female Dracula. Still, her affecting performance makes up for the tragic makeup decisions.



FILM: *Anaconda* (Sony, 1997)
FEATURED ASSET: Eyes
A 40-foot snake looking to wrap itself around her luscious frame causes Lopez's brown eyes to go wide. Or maybe she's just anticipating the reviews of this pitiful *Jaws* rip-off.

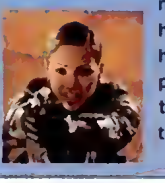


FILM: *U Turn* (Sony, 1997)
FEATURED ASSET: Breasts
Playing a low-down seductress in a low-cut dress, Lopez continues her tradition of starring in lousy movies by great directors (this time, Oliver Stone). But at least she looks good.



FILM: *Antz* (DreamWorks, 1998)
FEATURED ASSET: Vocal chords
Lopez's chirpy Azteca started off as Woody Allen's friend and ended up as Sly Stallone's main squeeze. Even when she's just doing voices she scores.

FILM: *Out of Sight* (Universal, 1998)
FEATURED ASSET: Ass
With the booty shot heard around the world, Lopez makes the ethnic back-rack the hottest topic in Hollywood. And her deliciously witty performance proves she's more than a life-support system for the world's finest butt.



MI FAMILIA, MONEY TRAIN, JACK, BLOOD AND WINE, ANACONDA, U TURN, ANTZ, AND OUT OF SIGHT: COURTESY OF PHOTOFEST. SELENA: COURTESY OF WARNER BROS

women's bodies is complicated not only by the history of slavery (yes, slavery existed in Puerto Rico) and those bodies as property, but also by rape.

When I relate to Lopez the mythologically proportioned but true—and I might add, pretty relevant—story of Hottentot Venus, the 19th-century South African girl who was taken around Europe in a cage and put on display naked, like an animal, the attraction being her "shelf-like" derriere, she responds appropriately, I guess. "That's disgusting."

It's not really her responsibility to contextualize other people's fetishes (or some ancient girl's containment). When a miscellaneous white-boy late-night-talk-show host makes comments bordering on lewd but meant to be complimentary about her ass, why not smile and work it? When she says, kind of finally, "I glorify in the fact that my mother bore me and I came out with her body," I'm certainly ready to throw a prideful fist in the air. But there is always reason to be suspicious when objectification gets tangled with celebration and your very cultural body part damn near requires its own publicist. "I would love to read an article where it's not even mentioned," she sighs. Sorry.

And since we're in feminist mode, I ask her about this notion of ambition being a dirty word when attached to women. One journalist I know, who, as he puts it, falls in love with all his female profilees, resisted Lopez's charms because "she's just so ambitious. I've never met anyone that ambitious before." Again, Lopez has a healthy unawareness of the charge. "Why? Is [ambition], like, a bad thing with women?" she asks rhetorically.

"I mean, yeah," she continues, "I'm ambitious, but so is everybody—men, women. Where I'm from, if you see somebody who stays home, it's like that's dirty too. I want something, you want something; you should do whatever makes you happy. If going after things and accomplishing things makes you happy, then fine. If staying home and baby-sitting makes you happy, that's cool." She takes a breath. And then with a dismissive wave of the hand and a little neck roll: "I don't look at things like that, what society says. It means nothing to me."

Convention seemed to have been cast to the wind when, within months, she fell in love with and married Noa. I don't ask her about her marriage because while she is warm she is also clearly guarded. But I do ask her about her own obvious passion (this is no Latin cliché I'm employing, it is her high intensity) and the struggle to keep it in check. "Being a passionate person, sometimes it's hard to exercise control," she says. "But you have to learn, you have to." It's as if she's talking herself into some new frame of mind. "Half the time you're like, 'God, I'm really stupid right now!'" She throws her head back and laughs. "But emotions are a very strong thing. It's harder for me now, 'cause I'm so self-aware. It's hard for me to let go, to be free like that."

And what of pain? It is not the deepest thing. Folks should know the moment they connect with Lopez that she will move on, that she will be fine, that besides her very close family and maybe Arlene, she doesn't exactly *need* anybody. She means it when she says of love, "I *love* love. Giving love, that's one of my biggest joys, youknowwhatimean?" But understand that Lopez is not only driven but guided. She was put on this planet to be this very big thing—her very aura glows—to be a star and shimmer in as many ways that light is refracted.

She has a better-than-decent singing voice, and her album is a winner. I admit I never took the Fly Girls too seriously as dancers, but watching her warm up with Landon is a workout in itself. And she comes alive when she dances. She literally lights up, throws that hair around, works that body. But it's on the big screen, on which movements are necessarily smaller, that she is, in my mind, her most artful. She buries vanity for the material. She makes intelligent choices, she selects great material, and more important, her instincts are honest once she's inhabited the characters she has chosen to give souls.

"I always try and make [characters] real," she says in earnest. "Not necessarily me. Just true to themselves." And you know that it is this kind of selflessness that will have us tracking her long after this album has stacked up smash singles, long after she has taught the world how to salsa. We will be talking about Jennifer Lopez well into her second and third Oscar wins. You just watch.


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GROWN ASS WOMAN POWER

Missy Elliott knows exactly what she wants. And if she can't make it, she'll take it. You got a problem with that, sucka?

By Marc Weingarten

ILLUSTRATION BY THE DYNAMIC DUO STUDIO FOR VIBE

GROWN ASS WOMAN POWER

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white women and girls who listen to Jewel's records.

"Yo, they was almost just as loud as going to a hip hop concert," says Elliott of the Lilith crowd. "Their participation was 100 percent. If I told them to say something, they *said* it. I was like, 'Okay, I'm feeling this!'"

Supa Dupa Fly sold a shade more than a million copies—which is way respectable for a debut. But Elliott couldn't help feeling a little short-changed. "For what we was coming with, I felt that it should have done better," she says. "It's funny, because I had so many good write-ups, but I guess you can never predict."

To hear Missy tell it, her records were just too radical for mainstream ears at first. "Radio didn't grasp me and Tim's records in the beginning. When we first went to them with [Aaliyah's] 'One in a Million,' they were like, 'We can't mix the beat into the next record'—same with 'Are You That Somebody?'"

Supa Dupa Fly did catch the ears of Elliott and Mosley's contemporaries, however, and it soon got to the point where you couldn't channel-surf the radio without hearing the duo's stutter-step science on countless other records. Her big-budget videos were cribbed too—just check out TLC's "No Scrubs" clip if you have any doubts.

"I mean, that's cool," says Elliott in regard to *Supa Dupa Fly*'s deep impact. "For Tim, if somebody bites his music it makes him angry. He's angry with the world right now because everybody ran with his style. It motivates me, though. It makes me realize I gotta change and do something else."

Welcome to *Da Real World*, an album without high-pitched "beep-beeps," classic-soul-music swipes, or what Missy refers to as the "kat-kat-kuh-kat" of Timbaland's trademark beats. In this brave new world, Elliott ditches *Supa Dupa Fly*'s feel-good funk and takes it straight to the street. Lifting a page from the Wu-Tang Clan's school of noir-hop, Elliott and Timbaland throw in jagged string sections and pound 808 body blows and weird, spooky swatches of harp and sitar. The result is harsher and more gut-grinding than *Supa Dupa Fly*.

"I'm coming real ill this time. It's gonna surprise a lot of people," Elliott tells me a week later as she plays back some of *Da Real World*'s tracks in an L.A. recording studio. When asked to explain the significance of the LP's title, Elliott waxes philosophical. "We tend to camouflage what really happens in the real world," she says. "Kids are having sex at a young age. I don't condone it, I'm just speaking out about it because we all tend to block it out. We've gotta stop living that lie."

But it's not just about babies making babies. On tracks like "We Did It" and "You Don't Know," Elliott also delves into the pathology of sexual abuse and the mind games men tend to play with women. "We Did It" is about how after a guy has sex with a girl he lies to his friends about it. ("I ain't never kissed her, man, she's buggin'.") "I feel like I know this subject matter because I see my friends going through it," Elliott says.

She punches up the track on the CD player, and a booming, baleful thump rattles the studio walls as Elliott sings her star-crossed tale of woe. She's listening intently, lost in a deep groove reverie, punctuating every rhythmic accent and sample swatch with a quick flick of the wrist, nodding to the beat with her eyes closed. Elliott's obviously feeling this, but can *she* relate?



Missy says, "Kill that noise!"

"I've gotta make my money first before I can be with any man," she says. "A lot of my girlfriends are so dependent on the guy giving them money when they feel like it. Just watching how dependent my mother was on my father..." She pauses. "You've got to work on your inner self first before you can be with a man." There's a trace of skepticism in Elliott's voice whenever she discusses men, perhaps because she's been down that road before.

When Elliott first emerged as a singing/rapping/writing phenom in 1994, she was hit with a cold front from more than few male hip hoppers who weren't into having their territory trod upon by a self-confident black woman determined to succeed on her own terms. That's where the venom that stokes *Da Real World's* first single, "She's a Bitch," comes from. Tough shit, fellas.

"I work in a male-dominated field," Elliott says. "When a man acts a certain way, he's aggressive, but when a woman acts the same way, she's a bitch. I feel females don't get taken as seriously as we should. That's why they call divas bitches—because they know what they want. I could look at TLC as bitches—but in a power way—because they just don't want no scrubs."

For Elliott, living well is the best revenge. When she signed to Elektra as a solo artist in 1996 after a remarkable run as a songwriter-for-hire, she was also given a production company that she named The Gold Mind. Although Missy the idol-maker hasn't yet set the world on fire the way she'd really like to (her protégée Nicole didn't generate as much heat as anticipated last year with her respectable gold-selling debut album, *Make It Hot*), she's got a bunch of projects in the till.

The fact that *Make It Hot* sold below expectations means little—Elliott's been getting calls from fans in high places lately. Last year, Whitney Houston was on the line, asking her to produce a couple of tracks for her latest album, *My Love Is Your Love* (Arista, 1998). "I couldn't even believe it," Elliott says humbly. "In the studio she'd be like, 'Does that sound okay to you?' And I'd be scared to say anything! But she'd say, 'Well, this is your record too.' She made me feel real comfortable."

For now, though, Elliott's putting everyone else on hold. She's writing a movie script, is in negotiations with HBO to produce a series of cartoons based on her space-age video persona, and may make a repeat appearance at this year's Lilith Fair. She's also continuing to mentor new talent. Fierce young rapper Dangermouf, rapper/singer Mocha, and singer TC will all have records out in the fall under The Gold Mind imprimatur. There's also a brand of lipstick with Iman called "Misdemeanor." Forget Y2K panic—Missy's ready to rumble into the new millennium.

"I just want to be living and breathing and getting into stuff that will be beneficial to kids," she says. "I also want to be driving that Cadillac!"

"I'VE GOTTA MAKE MY MONEY FIRST BEFORE I CAN BE WITH ANY MAN," ELLIOTT SAYS. "A LOT OF MY GIRLFRIENDS ARE SO DEPENDENT ON THE GUY GIVING THEM MONEY WHEN THEY FEEL LIKE IT."

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More than just a STEVIE WONDER *enthusiast,* JAMIROQUAI'S *wonder frontman,* JAY KAY, *knows a little something about fly birds, fast cars, and the bass-booming beats that comprise his gangsta boogie.* JAMES HUNTER *peeps the big-hatted dude's delicious musical English muffins.*

Jay Kay would rather be at home with his dog. On an afternoon when the late-April sky is as sunny and sharp as the 29-year-old Englishman's rapid-fire conversation, Kay climbs into a chauffeured van in front of his Manhattan hotel. He's headed downtown to see some "old motorcars." He says those words affectionately, with the regard of someone who himself owns several vintage Ferraris that he treats "like children."

PHOTOGRAPHED BY TARYN SIMON APRIL 15, 1999, THE FOUR SEASONS HOTEL, NEW YORK CITY



Microphone fiend Jay Kay

STYLING BY ENIL WILDEKIN. GROOMING BY DICKEY FOR JACQUES DEBARGE. PINK TURTLENECK AND NAVY LEATHER JACKET BOTH BY

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He is in town to discuss *Synkronized* (Work/Sony), his band Jamiroquai's new album, disco-boogie fire as fine and realized as anyone has recently rekindled. Kay feels brilliant today, he says, but he worries about his pup, a longhaired German shepherd named Luger. "He's in a teenage, naughty, I'm-going-to-take-your-best-sofa-and-rip-it-to-pieces mood," Kay says. "He's angry with me at the moment because I went away for two days, and now I'm gone again. Gets into a real grump." Kay has long wanted—in addition to Tigger and Fritz, his two cats—a well-bred and loyal-trained canine, "a proper dog," as he explains.

Traffic whirls around him. Shit is happening. There's the slight argument with his girlfriend, Denise Van Oughton, the former host of *The Big Breakfast*, England's youth-conscious TV wake-up show. There's the continued fallout from the October departure of Stuart Zender, Jamiroquai's original bassist, which caused Kay, keyboardist/songwriter Toby Smith, and drummer Derrick McKenzie to start rerecording *Synkronized*, scrapping three already finished tunes. Then there are the usual pre-album minidramas about artwork, track sequences, and interviews.

"Denise is out shopping," Kay says, "probably cursing me as I speak because I was moaning about this, that, and the other thing. I've got so much going on, what with people taking legal action about tunes you wrote." The reference, intentionally oblique, is in regard to Zender's leave-taking. "It's a bit difficult, the last thing you need. You're thrown a metal rod in the spokes of your bicycle, making you land six feet in the air, sprawled on the pavement with a bleeding nose. But," he adds, "this album has so much momentum, the steel rod may snap like a chopstick."

Little interferes with Jay Kay's high spirits today. He's proud of *Synkronized*, Jamiroquai's fourth and finest album, a dudless affair whose songs like "Canned Heat" and "Planet Home" unveil an unstodgy new maturity, a pruned-back yet fuller-seeming sound, and, on a standout like "Supersonic" (Kay hopes Busta Rhymes will remix it), a nod to U.K. dance culture that's not just your usual piled-on beats per second. The album was recorded in the fast-emerging studio in Kay's new country house 40 miles northwest of London. Like Jamiroquai's previous albums, it is meticulously done, the work of musicians who, as drummer McKenzie says, are "reliable" and offer "timeless music" that provides fans "good value for the money."

Recording at home has given the music a new, unruffled confidence. "It's phatter," Kay says of this vibe. "I'm not waving and moaning over everything. I've kept things sweet and simple. It's a dance record." And indeed, *Synkronized* is where Jay Kay finds his own voice as a singer. "If you get Jay on a subject, any subject, he does tend to go on for half a hour," says Smith. "Here he deliberately tried to keep his singing more concise, and not go on and on, like his talking, his big soliloquies."

Emergency on Planet Earth (Sony, 1993) and *The Return of the Space Cowboy* (Sony, 1995), the band's first two albums, did well at home and internationally. "Virtual Insanity," the hit song and much-played video from 1996's *Traveling Without Moving* (Work/Sony), broke them in the States, winning Grammys and MTV Awards. And people still said the Jamiroquai dude sounded like Stevie Wonder—even though Kay frequently let loose with comments like, as he says now, "Well, when you mention Stevie Wonder you mention someone who can play drums and keyboards, a fucking genius. Which I'm not. There's a great difference. Everybody's influenced, but you're only influenced so far. You cannot just copy...you cannot just sound like Stevie Wonder."

Kay takes off on a few bars of "Planet Home," as he is wont to do in conversation and always does when he's figuring out string or brass parts with his collaborators. Dressed today in Nike Air Maxes, old brown cords, and an orange fake-fur pullover seemingly custom-made from the coat of a neon bear, Jamiroquai's lead dude is *on*.

He chats: "Classical music is high on my list right now. Tchaikovsky. Rachmaninoff. You go through musical tastes, don't you? And, believe it or not, opera. But that's got something to do with driving Ferraris." He howls. "It's like Stilton cheese—I never used to eat Stilton cheese. I never used to drink Port either. And now I'm heading for gout, desperately trying to entertain gout in my left foot. No more of those boogie videos—he's only got one leg now, shit." He turns thoughtful. "I love things to be proper. You know, if you're going to do something, do it properly." He occasionally smokes. He doesn't miss a thing. His mother was a jazz singer capable of brilliant imitation, whose style Kay compares to Lena Horne's.

"I've always been car-mad," he says, his head turned by an old Rolls that has just passed by. "It comes from when my mum was gigging, actually being in a car all the time. I was brought up in the back of a car. People say, 'What do you do in your spare time?' I say, when there's spare time I jump in the car and go to Scotland or Wales, to open roads and countryside. It's how I ease off."

He lived his first two years in Manchester, the survivor of identical twins born to Englishwoman Karen Kay and a Portuguese father who has never been present in his life. "My mum took me around the world with her," he recalls. "She used to do a lot of gigs in South Africa, Nigeria, Las Vegas, places like that—that mix of '70s entertaining. Then I lived just about everywhere in England, because she would do summer stage stuff—we'd be in Devon, then Suffolk, then come to London then and again. I only moved to London when I was 13. That's when life started going downhill."

In London, Kay was sent to boarding school in Leicestershire, which he found useless. "I had a hard time, was picked on by teachers, was accosted," he says. "I'm very much one of those people who's a bit too much of a free spirit. I've always felt that my place as a human being was on this earth, and I'm no higher or lower than anyone else." As a result, despite his mother's wish that he become a lawyer, Kay left school at 16.

Back in London, he picked up skateboarding. "You lived to skate. I was really into my puffing stage then," he says, "my big hashish stage. Everybody wanted old [Levi's] 501s then, so we'd go out and rob piles of old 501s and walk out with this parachute bag and go and sell them off to all the 'hip kids' from Kensington and Chelsea. Then we'd go back to Ealing, sit on the cree, buy ourselves a quarter puff, a couple cans of beer, and skate."

Then things got out of hand. "I was getting into trouble, petty crime. I wasn't robbing banks, but I was, you know, being a naughty boy. Like most people are. Bad company, etc." One particular "terrible day" eventually put Kay on a different course. "I had three fights. Someone tried to stab me. And there'd been a burglary. I'd just been in the wrong place at the wrong time, but I was accused of burgling the place. And then I was gassed in the face by somebody who had a canister, which was bloody painful. It was a hard time."

Traffic stops for what seems like an hour as loud fire trucks and police take over and command the streets. Two French girls carrying enormous knapsacks make their way through the snafu. They seem like the kind of girls who, only a couple of months ago, told an American visiting Paris, "I like the Rolling Stones. I like Puff Dad-dy. I like Chet Ba-ker. And I love Jamiro-quai."

"I was getting into trouble, PETTY CRIME, *" admits Jay Kay. "I wasn't robbing banks, but I was, you know, being a* NAUGHTY BOY. *"*

But Kay is back in the early '90s. "I locked myself away for six months," he remembers. "I wrote lyrics, tunes, came up with the logo, the name, the script for the name. And so I went from the logo and the hat, to being this kind of real boogie warrior." Then he had a junk epiphany. "I'd come in one night and seen this spaghetti western playing on TV. I was stoned. There were the horses,"—Kay imitates the sound of jetting hoof beats—"the Indians, and the horns. I could see that all these elements were so like my hat!" Instantly, he conflated the name of a Vietnam-era helicopter (the Bell 1H1V *Iroquois*), the Native-American reference ("I did my reading and found out it was part of the six tribes who hang around the New York region"), and the notion of jamming to get to that fairly magical made-up name, Jamiroquai. "I could almost see it then," Kay recalls, "Ladies and gentlemen, Jamiroquai!" In no time flat, so did London pop bizzers. A showcase or two, and Kay signed to


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RAPPERS DIG JAMIROQUAI. *This thrills Kay. "For someone like me, a little white guy from England, that's a* **REAL THING.**"

a publishing deal with EMI, followed by a large eight-album record contract with Sony.

Rappers dig Jamiroquai. The band has had five requests for sample clearances from the first two albums alone. And on *Supa Dupa Fly* (Elektra, 1997), Missy Elliott sampled "Morning Glory," a Miles Davis–like meditation from *The Return of the Space Cowboy*. This thrills Kay. "For someone like me, a little white guy from England, that's a real thing." He has come a ways. Right now, he's designing a line for—instead of stealing—Levi's. Jackets, he predicts, fashioned around panels. "Something functional, decent, sporty, something bulletproof." He's toying with a prototype.

Finally, Kay arrives at his destination in Greenwich Village, Cooper Classics Ltd., where one walks upstairs to a series of large, connected garages. Kay is met at the door by Elliot Cuker, the firm's president, a smiling guy who's impressed by Kay's knowledge of vintage Mercedes-Benzes ("Sly Stallone had this one") and Bentleys ("I had one that belonged to Perry Ellis, after he died"). Cuker is fond of saying things like, "I believe Prince Charles owns..." and telling stories about Yoko Ono once not only buying an old car but also hiring its driver. Kay likes a couple things: a baronial '61 300D Mercedes with 84,000 miles, luscious red-leather interior, and wide white walls, for one, about which he exclaims, "This car needs love!" But he falls hardest for a black Shelby Mustang from the '60s, complete with stringy fiberglass hood-fasteners (it's the most Italian-looking thing Cuker has to offer).

Back in the street, someone recognizes Kay as the Jamiroquai dude, the self-described "cheeky chappie" who's "always grinning, always pulling those cheeky, nutty, funky moves like bloody Robin Williams on acid" and who's now famously a driver of flash cars. Riding back uptown, he says the guy asked him when Jamiroquai's new record was coming out and what it was like. "I told him," Kay says, "that every track sounds like Stevie Wonder." But he knows he's got an album, this time, to put that hoary old charge soundly to rest. So he just howls with laughter.



BOOGIEMAN: Whoa! There's a ghost in Jay Kay's hotel room.

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THE WORLD-RENOWNED ROOTS. *On tour in Europe. Think it's all five-star suites and fantasy babes with plaster-casters? Conspicuous consumption of fine wines and fondues? A peek into* Ahmir "?uestlove" Thompson's *tour diary reveals the cold, hard truth: Every hotel has the same movies on pay-per-view, folks get to missing McDonald's, and not* everybody *knows your name.*

PHOTOGRAPHS BY AHMIR THOMPSON AND KELO SAUNDERS

Tales from a hip bop tour. Oh yeah, I know what you think: see the world, hobnob with other celebs. All-night candlelight vigils outside the window of your hotel room as the fans sing your hits. And the women? Whew! *No head, no backstage pass!* Six Gs for every 20 minutes is the pay you'll earn. After every show, security will escort you to a 25-passenger limousine that will take you to your penthouse suite.

Believe it or not, folks, the above is only true for a lucky few. Sure, if you release the biggest-selling album of all time it's true. If the title of your biggest-selling album happens to be #1's, then it's probably true. High-profile ballplayer? (They "tour" too.) Happen to be CEO of your own label? Then it's true for you too. But what about the rest of us? The blue-collar musicians?

Peace. This is the liner-note god (sorry, David Ritz), ?uestlove: afroed drummer and cofounding member of the hardest-working band in music, the Roots. We are currently playing a string of shows overseas, pushing our fourth album, *Things Fall Apart* (MCA), which has been out since February of this year. We've been on the road since the first day of its release, and we'll be on the road for the next 15 months. You heard right. Fifteen months of hotel French onion soup, *Out of Sight* and *Enemy of the State* in 10 languages on pay-per-view. Torn passports, lost airline tickets, long-distance phone calls, lust at first sight, cock-blocking, hour-long interviews, photo shoots, radio drops, overextended guest lists, 6 a.m. calls from angry business managers ("*Ahmir, no one pays $300 for a David Axelrod record. No one.*"). Insomnia and jet lag in the same breath. Female companionship, white lies, one-night stands, encores, moshing, and hecklers. Arguments, bonding, and loving. And adoration. For the next three weeks, I'll be your guide as we travel Europe (a.k.a., just another day at the office).


mal (left) and Kelo
to make an 8 a.m.
photo shoot in London.

Manchester, England. 4.14.99. 9 a.m.
After a sleepless seven-hour flight (Kids. Gotta love 'em. Only when I'm on airplanes do I wish God had created them with optional mute buttons.), we arrive safely (Thank God, no customs hassles!) in time to get on our tour bus. Nigel Hassler, our international booking agent, told us this is the same tour bus that the Backstreet Boys used. Yeah, right. This shit is filthy. There's dust everywhere, all kitchenware is spotted, and our driver seems genuinely surprised that we're not happy. And the movie selection?!! *Lethal Weapon* again? More *Die Hard*? Hey, I love *Mr. Bean* as much as the next geezer, but I watched episodes 1 through 14 on the last European tour...

Manchester. 4.15.99. 5:30 a.m.
First show under our belt. Melky Sedeck (Wyclef's Jean's siblings) is opening for us. As tired as we were, we still rocked it, but we had to shorten the show because of curfew laws.... As far as the postshow activities, some girls from Oxford took me and [sound designer and one fifth of the Grand Wizards production team] Kelo out to "a pub." Oh boy, I wasn't trying to get all caught up in some rinky-dink hole in the wall where a bunch of "blokes" would "take a piss" on "me" hair while Cher's "Believe" plays for the zillionth time. But I was wrong. The atmosphere was cool and we chilled until 5 a.m., drinking espressos, discussing the woman's role in the Bible. Eve. Lot's wife. Mary Magdalene. Jezebel...

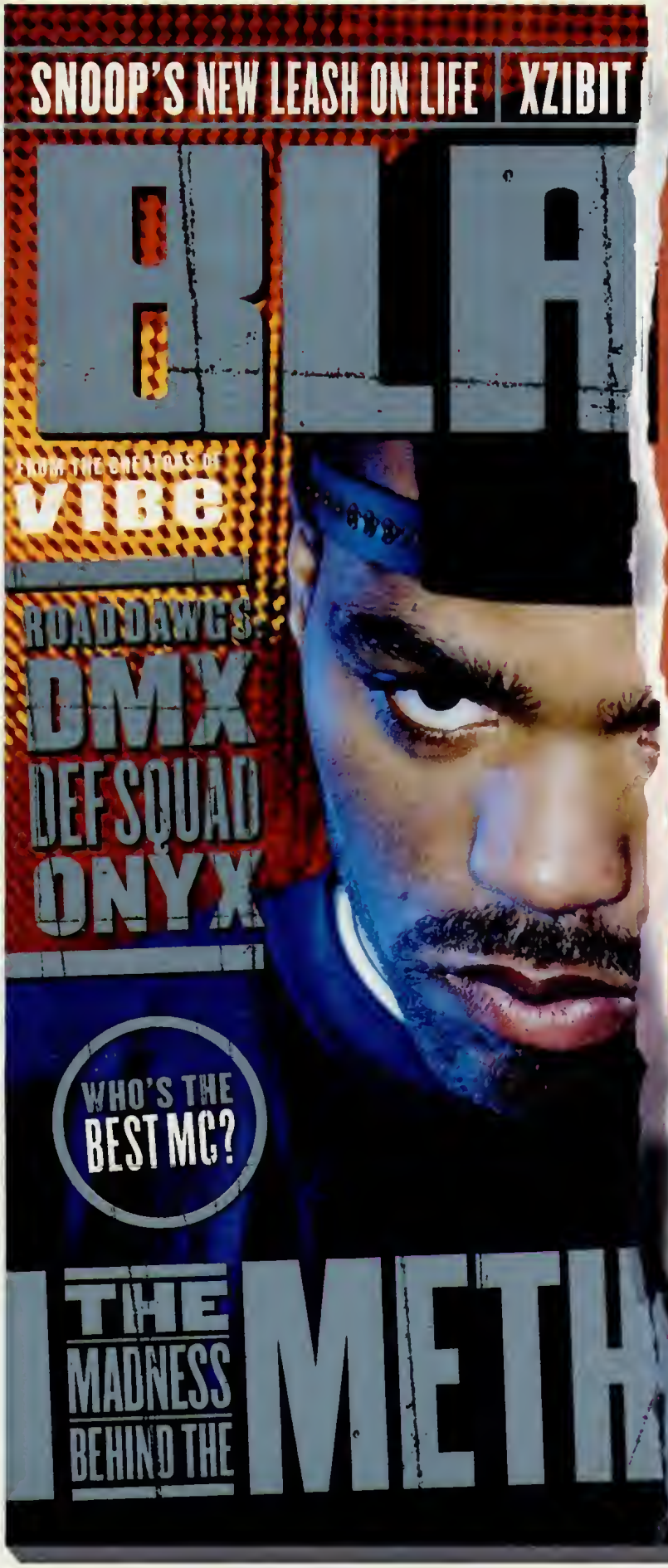
London, England. 4.15.99. 10:25 a.m.
This is the part of tour life that I hate. Someone broke into our dressing room and stole [tour manager] Toya's computer, setting us back a good week in paperwork. (Not to mention, forcing me to document this story on manuscript paper. I also left my duffel bag in the cab with $500 worth of CDs in it, including my beloved Fela Kuti collection. Rats!!!) *And* they took my cell phone. It's getting hard to write this journal under these conditions. The bus smells like boiled piss (not that the driver didn't try to disguise it with Windex). Ugh.

Tilburg, Holland. 4.17.99. 6 a.m.
Jet lag is catching up with me. I attempted to watch Demi Moore in *Striptease* for the fifth time. (I always fall asleep at the half-hour point. It's not exactly Oscar material.) Woke up and realized that soon hereafter comes the most dragged-out part of tour life (and how ironic for me, the media junkie): interview time! While the others get their "green" on (y'all know the deal with Holland), I stay put to answer every question asked. Topics range from the album title to the cover photo to how we hooked up with Erykah Badu. (One journalist even thought that her son, Seven, was my child. I looked him square in the eye and said, "You caught me.") Last night's show was perfect. But afterward, an attempt to talk to the honeys was thwarted by the constant presence of what I call the "Represent Represent!" factor. I guess you could call these people male groupies. "Yo, B! Can I smoke a blunt with you?" "Yo, yo, yo! I representah from de Neuw Yark!" (Think Yakov Smirnoff drunk on Olde E.) These are some cock-blocking motherfuckers. After three hours of this shit, there's nothing else to do but spend another evening with Demi.

Amsterdam, Holland. 4.17.99. 4 p.m.
When I accepted this piece for VIBE, I definitely had thoughts of bringing to life this Hunter S. Thompson gonzo journalism thing. Especially coming to Amsterdam, since everybody always asks about the coffee shops and the red-light district. But somebody fucked up, and I'm sitting in this damned hotel room a full half hour away from the downtown area. I was told that we'd be staying in our usual spot, right in the heart of the action. This has to be divine intervention because I swore I was going to expose the truth behind Amsterdam's infamous nightlife. The first time I came over here, a girl who couldn't have been a day older than 17 was bragging to her coworkers that she just "finished off" a famous American singer and his then red-hot singing protégés. (I saw this mystery singer with my own eyes.) But my reportage is stifled for the moment because someone forgot to book the right hotel three weeks in advance! Well, there's always tomorrow. Thank God for Jennifer (*Out of Sight* is the only English program on the tube tonight).

Amsterdam. 4.18.99. 3 a.m.
Tonight's show was zany (What else could you expect in Amsterdam?). A bunch of stoned-out Surinamese kids "representing the real"—representing a little too well, actually—started acting up during "Concerto of the Desperado." These six kids pounded the shit out of some helpless teen. They victoriously cheered and looked at us as if we condoned it. We stopped mid-song only to find out that there was no security or medical aid in the bouse. After the show, we decided to go out on the town (finally!). As is to be expected, bowever, Murphy rules everything around us. The wbole town shut down early. Gonzo journalism, my ass. Another night ofwatching that Clooney motherfucker slobbering on my woman.

Paris, France. 4.20.99. 7:45 p.m.
We bad a day off yesterday to see the sights and whatnot. We hooked up with some friends who recently relocated from Philly. They took us salsa dancing at this Afro-Cuban club. This drop-dead-gorgeous woman stared at me for what seemed like an eternity. Although I was dancing with someone else, I stared back. *Goddamn, she's fine.* Kelo tells me to kick it to ber. I play the sby role, 'cuz I know that either language or someone else will be a barrier. Soon she gets up (Oh, shit!) and walks up to our host, Kevin. She whispers something in his ear. (Damn!) He smiles. (Double damn!) Then he looks at me and points (Whoa!) and smiles. (Yes!) Sbe walks away. (?!!) He waves me over (...) and tells me she wants to talk. (YES!!!!) So, I walk over (Be cool,



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Ahmir) and say, "*Hello.*" (Why is it that I always develop a phony accent when I start speaking to foreigners? Note to self: Stop that.) "Hi," she says. (Awwwwww shucks!) "Listen," she continues, "I have to say," (Yes, she speaks English!!) "I've been watching you for some time," (Yeah! Yeah! Don't stop now, babe!) "and I must say..." (I can't stand it!!!) "the girl you're dancing with is so beautiful." (Huh?) "I must have her..." (D'oh!) *Merde!*

Lund, Sweden. 4.22.99. 3:18 a.m.
Well, my theory has now proven correct after seven years of touring. Small towns are the shit. Lund is eight hours south of Stockholm. The drive down here says we're in Kansas (countryside, barnyards, cows, blondes), but once you come to the venue, all that is outta' here. They're up on hip hop more than some New Yorkers (even though that ain't saying much nowadays). It's always gratifying to hear non-English speakers recite "Proceed" verbatim. On the other hand, our latest single, "You Got Me," is a problem. When we got to the chorus (sung by Erykah Badu on the record) MC Tariq decides to pull a Bobby Brown. (You remember those awards shows, where Bobby would yell "Y'ALL SING IT!" and then the audience would wind up singing, like, all of side two of his record?) We just knew the crowd was going to kick it. But instead, when Tariq said, "Y'ALL SING IT!" the response was a roomful of cricket-chirping silence. (Rats!) One of our European friends—who does speak English—told us that even though she had the CD, the chorus to "You Got Me" was still a mystery. ("I couldn't figure out what the bloody hell Erykah was saying.") I thought Erykah was crystal clear in her delivery, but apparently I thought wrong. For future reference, and for the official record, it's like this: "If you are worried about where / I've been or who I saw or / What club I went to with my homies / Baby, don't worry / You know that you got me."

Copenhagen, Denmark. 4.25.99. 1:10 a.m.
Today, I was on a mission for McDonald's. I really miss the taste of home. But the promoter told me that the nearest one was 25 minutes away. Tonight's show was cool. Yadda yadda yadda. The weather is getting nicer. Yadda yadda yadda. Played a very interesting game of truth or consequences back at the hotel.



German version of *Entertainment Weekly*). As I sign, I realize I'm writing over a review of our record in which the writer called us "extremely boring intelligent rap." Then the motherfucker gave us one and a half stars out of a possible five. Three minutes later, I bump into American tennis goddess Venus Williams. She's seated at a computer in the lobby of the hotel. I was really hoping that somehow we could trade tickets (her upcoming match today for the Roots show tonight). I figured, she's a teen, she makes a living by having fun, and she's *straight outta Compton*. Shoo-in, right? Oh God, no. *Ms. Williams?* (Why did I say that? I'm 10 years her senior.) She looks up. Stares at me in a way that I imagine that white folk stare at her beaded coif. Slowly, cautiously she shakes my hand, then raises her eyebrow in a "What—not *who*, but *what*—are you?" sorta way. She doesn't recognize me. I do the very thing I hate other Americans for when I see them in foreign countries, 'specially when they're lurking at the backstage door: name-drop. *I...I... I'm...from the States.* (She looks very unimpressed.) *I got a hip hop group called the Roots.* "Oh," she says, and goes back to whatever she was doing at the terminal. Shit, I'm drowning, I need help. *I would...uh... I'd...* "Yes?" *I would like to say* (Give it up, Ahmir, get out as quickly as you can!) *that I think you're a marvelous player.* (Excellent comeback! Original!) "Uhh," she says, "thank you." Then she walks away. (I wanna go home.) Having witnessed my pitiful effort, the bellhop gives me his tickets for the match that afternoon. Even though they're in the Bob Uecker section, a seat is a seat, and I was happy to watch a legend at work.

Milan, Italy. 5.6.99. 2:07 a.m.
Tonight was by far the worst night of the tour. Suddenly, I'm reminded why we only come to Italy every other year. For starters, I'm already heated that [stage manager] Princess and/or Toya left me on the bus (sleeping) for three hours while the rest of the group got to shower, change, and sleep in real beds. Heads are gonna roll for this one. Then the promoter tells us that we must cut our two-hour show to a mere 45 minutes. (Oh, brother.) Then to top it off, we had to fight our way out of the venue to get back to the bus. Some wannabe raver chick who looked like she was strung out on heroin spit on Melky Sedeck's DJ, Scratch, after he wouldn't relinquish his pizza to her and her crew of 13. Scratch then kicked the shit out of some other person who tried attacking him. Then, they got rushed by our crew, who then got rushed by more of their crew, who then got rushed by a group of Ethiopian spectators, who then got rushed by more people, who then got rushed by Melky's crew, who got attacked by some kids who hurled a brick through the front of our tour-bus window. Now niggas are *heated*. Our keyboardist Kamal is ready to kill somebody. And someone is ready to kill Kamal. Chaos and disorder everywhere. This is definitely a race war. And the pizza wasn't even bangin'. ☐

Gothenburg, Sweden. 4.26.99. 2 a.m.
Tonight's show was in a small town southwest of Stockholm. I'm really getting homesick now. These women I met just migrated here from Morocco six years ago, and they have American stuff that I haven't even heard of. Culture clash can be a surprising thing. Mention the name "Mumia" in the States, and nine times out of 10 an exasperated look will come over most people's faces. Meanwhile, over here, they're holding weekly protests and demonstrations for someone whose home country they've never even been to. Tonight we did our own version of "Mack the Knife," to the surprise of the audience members. I get the feeling that we could just learn the Wayne Newton catalog and spend our latter days in Vegas if we wanted.

Hamburg, Germany. 4.30.99. 3:15 p.m.
Not a good day today. It just keeps coming. At lunch, the food was horrible, and this waitress asked me to John Hancock her *P* magazine (sorta like a

WHY IS IT THAT I ALWAYS DEVELOP A PHONY ACCENT WHEN I START SPEAKING TO FOREIGNERS? (NOTE TO SELF: STOP THAT.)


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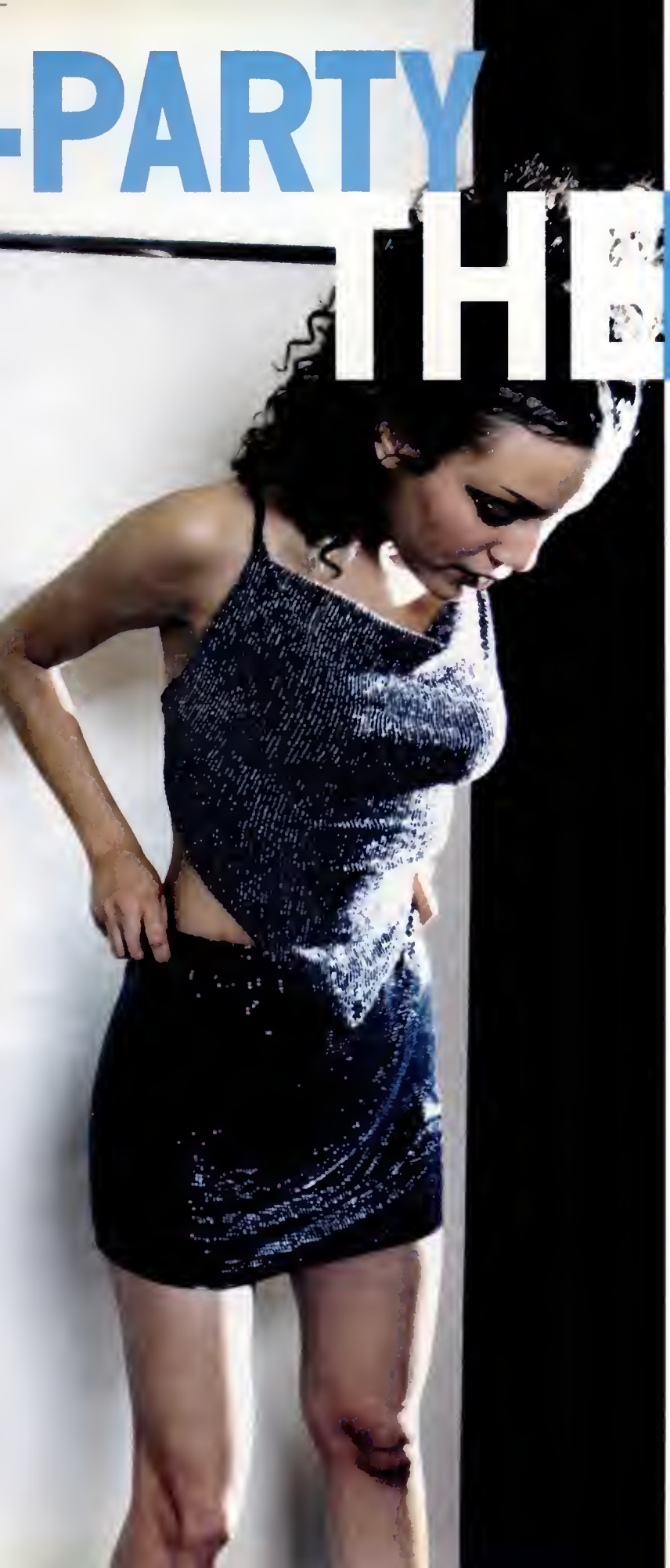
THE SHOW,

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1106

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THE MALE PERFORMER IS ALSO A MODEL.



-PARTY THE HOTEL

BACKSTAGE PASS

She is the stuff of urban legend. She is a true believer, a pleasure seeker. She is the one crying out to be chosen. She is a hip hop groupie. Will you still love her tomorrow? ***By Karen R. Good***

Boo, you know how many women we meet with no panties?
–Mase, "Lookin' at Me" (*Harlem World*, Bad Boy, 1997)

Round a table in the barroom of the Sheraton Hotel overlooking the Elizabeth River in Virginia Beach, Va., Jay-Z and his brethren TyTy, Radolfo, Hip Hop, Ja Rule, and Memphis Bleek congregate. Ponies runneth over with Hennessey VSOP, glasses rise, and then, a toast:

"This right here," says Jay-Z soberly, "is for success."

"For success!" his consorts follow.

"Can't have success without...loyalty," Jay continues.

"Yeh, yeh!" they respond.

It's Labor Day weekend 1998, the weekend during which thousands of students from surrounding Chesapeake Bay communities and black colleges like Howard and Morgan State (and even more southern campuses like Hampton and Norfolk State) come for one last hurrah before school begins.

Jay-Z, who will perform the next night, Saturday, with DMX at the Hampton Convention Center, lifts another glass. "This one here..." he says, quiet now, "this one is for family."

"One love! Roc-A-Fella fa life."

"And this one right here is for the groupies!"

"Long live the groupies! Long live the groupies!"

Tonight, stories flow like Jesus wine. Tales about tours and one-ups on who's slept with the most women—groupies, they call them—while on the road, bragging rites as necessary and orgasmic as the act itself. "I've fucked half the bitches in the USA," one maintains. "*Half!*" Grand, mythic, ridiculous accounts are told of women trailing them from state to state like the feds, of women dared to do things like stand on their heads, of women lining up in twos and threes to suck the same guy.

"Detroit," Jay-Z promises, "got the best pussy. They just straight 'bout it. I respect that more than somebody who tries to front. I'm in town one night. What the fuck I need with a girl with a value?"

With hip hop generating billions of dollars a year—edging out rock as the lifestyle of the rich and famous—tales of young-girl groupies who haunt productions like the Hard Knock Life tour and the Puff Daddy and the Family tour have become the stuff of urban legend. *Did you hear about the two Italian chicks on Survival of the Illest? Ultimate groupies. In every city they did at least 20 niggas apiece!* A general rule: The fan might accompany an artist to the hotel room to hang out—but the groupie will hit the artist off.

According to *Webster's* dictionary, the term "groupie" originated in 1967 and is defined as "a fan of a rock group who usually follows the group around on concert tours." Rock fan/girlfriend Pamela Des Barres wrote a book about it called *I'm With the Band: Confessions of a Groupie* (William Morrow, 1987). Des Barres, who stood on stage in the 1970s while the Who played "Tommy" and traveled with Led

PHOTOGRAPHS BY GILLIAN LAUB

Zeppelin as Jimmy Page's girl, writes that "groupie" started out as "negative finger-pointing...by someone who obviously couldn't get backstage."

Be it rock or hip hop, the magic of music is that it has always inspired a certain glory and power. Who among us has not been brought to tears, ecstasy, or uprising by song? But some can't separate the music from the messenger, and to listen is not enough. Like Des Barres, a hip hop groupie believes in going *behind* the music in search of a real-life fantasy. The artist creates the illusion; the groupie is the true believer.

We must remember, however, that this is a *relationship*, a compromise. An indulgence of egos in need of satiation and acknowledgment. If that were not so, then Joe Rapper, who's well-known and married, wouldn't be standing outside of the Sheraton this warm night, shortly before the football game, passing around a camera showing a videotape of a young girl doing him. She is smiling, has pretty eyes, her expression a bit geisha. All you see of Joe are his knees and toes. See this and you understand that man has needs: voyeurism, bravado, and carnality. Woman has similar needs, but add to that a lust for challenge and a desire to be chosen. Groupies make sure these needs get met.

On Saturday night there are no post-concert parties worth stopping by, so a few hundred people stand loosely on Waterside Avenue, in front of the Sheraton.

Sweetness, Tawana, and Kim* are three Virginia high school girls who tell boys they're in college. They are sweet, fass girls, looking to see who's out this balmy evening. Tawana is thin—the kind of thin country girls call "po"—and wears thick stacked shoes and a micromini. Sweetness, who has dimples and a braided ponytail bun, is thick, sporting second-skins to prove it. Kim, a dark-skinned girl who doesn't seem to know her beauty, is disappointed because she tried to take a picture with Jay-Z and he hurried her along, despite her outfit—again, a micromini and heels—which she thought was perfect. "It's about the women he prefers," she says. As she speaks, a shadow of a guy walks by swiftly and palms Sweetness's ass. She cuts her eyes at his back. "And he ain't *no* damn body." Her hand rests on her wide hips. "*Nobody*."

What makes a hip hop groupie different from any other groupie is the difference in the music and culture itself. Something to do with hip hop's accessibility and the brevity of fame. With being working class and making no way The Way. For girls like Tawana, Kim, and Sweetness, some of this is about closing the degrees of separation, going for the man next to the man next to the man next to The Man. Other times it's less about the man, more about what he manifests: the success and shiny things and, perhaps most important, the suggestion of godliness—God: Rakim, Allah, Nas ("like the Messiah"), Jayhova. The groupie knows that she has limited access to this otherworld. Her skills of seduction can get her in.

"I know I look like a little slut," Kim says. "Four o'clock in the morning. Little dress, high heels. Trust me, the things I've had said to me tonight...you don't even know. The way we're dressed today is nothing [like] how our personalities are. I'm trying to get the attention that will draw the attention *to him*. That's the girl who will fit his image."

Chaka Pilgrim, one of the creators of Fanfamily, a company that answers fan mail for artists such as DMX, Jay-Z, and Foxy Brown, says that sometimes these women have a plan. "You think these women are playing themselves," she says, "but then you'll see them behind the scenes and you'll be like, 'Okay, I was there when we did the concert at the Tunnel. I was there when this bitch came and stuck her tongue in your ear. Okay, here it is three weeks later and she's in the studio.' So there's more than a one-night stand going on.

"Then you get the girls who just want to have sex," Pilgrim continues. "Like, no panties, grab his hand, put between crotch and 'Feel my furry wonder-pouch.' So with that in mind, girls really have their own agenda."

Male groupies are harder to distinguish. Usually they simply linger and try to be cool, but they also cry real tears of regret every time Lauryn Hill gives birth; they offer Lil' Kim money to have sex; they stalk Madonna. Shotgun funk goddess Joi (who's married to Big Gipp of the Goodie MOb) says that male groupies are usually awestruck. "Most times they're respectful of the art and realize, 'This might be bigger than me,'" she says. "Female groupies, on the other hand, are going to test the men. They wanna get up and touch something."

That said, when the girls are asked if they have or would ever have sex with a rapper just because of who he is, Tawana says: "Uh-uh." Sweetness: "Fuck, no." Kim: "Well, Nas," she admits, "Nas Escobar. Yep."

This is Kim's fantasy: "Aiight, boom: I'm at this concert, right? And I'm in the crowd, in the front. And then it be Nas, the whole Firm on stage. I'm in the crowd, right, and Nas pulls me up there. Then I see him backstage and..." Kim stops, covers her face. "I don't wanna talk about it."

A guy listening on the sidelines tosses in his 2 cents. "We know the rest! This is a groupie movie!"

"No! No! No, 'cause we carry on a relationship!" Kim is adamant. "He takes me on tour and everything, and I'm living the lifestyle he rappin' about. Look, I love him. I really do. I'm not tryin' to be funny. I really have a thing for Nas. Unlike anybody else."

As dawn nears, the girls scurry inside the hotel toward the elevators. Their plan is to stop on random floors and knock on random doors until they find Jay-Z. Or Somebody.

THEIR PLAN IS TO STOP ON RANDOM FLOORS AND KNOCK ON RANDOM DOORS UNTIL THEY FIND JAY-Z. OR SOMEBODY.

Why are these women in front of the hotel at four in the morning?" Crystal* wants to know. The bald desperation is completely lost on her. Crystal is, after all, sophisticated and pretty, exuding the faintest shade of snobbery, focused, and maybe a little neurotic. She flicks a nonexistent ash from her cigarette, then: "Oh! *Riiiight*. Lingering. Oh, I don't do that. Oh *please*. That's groupie shit. I'm not a groupie. I'm a *neo-groupie*."

It is a term only she can explain. "The neo-groupie isn't trying to get discarded. That's pathetic. I am the ghetto superstar prize. *Those niggas want me*. And why

*Not their real names

WIVE'S TALE

By Crystal McCrary Anthony

I was still making the transition from poor student to NBA wife when Greg [Anthony] and I showed up for the postgame party at a trendy club in New York City about six years ago. The event was the first we'd attended as a married couple, and I was thrilled to be out on the town with my man. As we walked by the line of people waiting to get in, I could hear the women in microminis and halter tops calling out, "Ooh, he looks good with his bald head." "You think that's his wife? Hmph." Even though we were holding hands, I felt invisible.

Inside the club, we were grooving shoulder-to-shoulder when some blond inched up behind my husband and palmed his ass like a basketball. He jumped. My mouth dropped open. Part of me wanted to slap the hair-sprayed bimbo, but another wondered if my husband had encouraged her in some way when I had gone to the ladies' room a few minutes before. Greg, seeking to smooth things over, gave me what I've come to understand is the routine response—a dismissive "She's just a groupie." The implication was clear: "Don't even sweat it, baby. She ain't worth the time."

When I think back to the incident, I realize that with a wave of his hand Greg had dismissed an entire legion of women—the ones who show up at NBA events dressed in summer clothes in the middle of February, waiting, just waiting, to meet the jersey of their dreams. Groupies, hoochies, jock chasers, freaks, chickenheads, call them what you will. My husband was painting these women as nonthreats, as nonvalid, and I'm sure his teammates had done the same with their wives. "Yeah, baby, I know you still tryin' to lose those 50 extra pounds after the baby and all, but don't worry 'bout that fine honey with the dope body who's always sweatin' me after games. She ain't got nothin' on you." *Yeah, right.*

I ask myself how much of a threat these glorified stalkers pose every time I spot one of them on the prowl outside the locker room or lingering in the lobby of a Ritz-Carlton at 2 o'clock in the morning. These women hardly look like they're being dismissed. Somebody's encouraging them, and it sure ain't the wives.

In recent years, my own groupie sightings have tapered down as everyone from team managers to sports agents seems to be conspiring to keep wives away from these wannabe mistresses. They've even begun to hide us, the "legitimate" significant others, in a "family lounge" before and after the games. We wives enjoy plush leather sofas, stuff our faces with skewered shrimp, gossip uninterrupted, plan baby showers, and organize charity events while tucked away in the bowels of the arena. Presumably we're treated to all these fun-filled diversions so we can avoid the unsavory element. But when it's time for our husbands to play away games, we're called "distractions" by their coaches and asked to stay at home.

Funny, I've never heard of groupies being banned from road trips. But that's right, they're not really threats to us wives—are they, baby?

Crystal McCrary Anthony is married to Greg Anthony, point guard for the Portland Trailblazers, and is coauthor of Homecourt Advantage *(Avon Books, 1998).*



shouldn't I enjoy being desired?"

Crystal, a tiny woman with soft hair cut low and skin the color of weak tea, pads around her friend Gongo's Lower East Side, New York City apartment in fuzzy socks, loose blue jeans, and a cozy turtleneck that could swallow her small frame. Gongo and his three friends wander the flat. They pass reefer, flip TV channels, and occasionally interject.

Crystal is the '90s progression of Des Barres in that the attraction to celebrity is still about the power and the glory, claim and sex. But for Crystal, fame isn't the goal. It's about *money*, which she believes grants freedom and certain liberties. No struggling like her parents with two mortgages, grease marks around the light switch, and '70s green velvet everywhere. Maybe, she admits, it's also something to "blackify" her, because she's biracial with a Jewish last name. "A little ghetto dude on my arm with a six-pack and fly Hilfiger latest something or other. I feel like people can't play me if I'm his fly bitch—'cause they don't. You know how nice they are to me?" She laughs. "I love it when people are nice to me that way.

Crystal, who is from a working-class neighborhood in Suffolk County, Long Island but now lives in Manhattan, does not work but likes nice things. She dates accordingly. "There are definitely fly niggas about," Crystal says, "but power takes it to the next level." She pauses, then, gives estimation:

"Have you ever been to Switzerland?" she asks.

No.

"It's beautiful. It's beautiful this time of year."

So is Morocco, she recalls, and so is Holland, which she visited with a rapper, whom she'd rather not name, while he was touring Europe a few years ago. She says she's no concubine. "I [participate in oral sex], it's true. But I do other things with my day. I ski, read, go horseback riding. I shop."

"You're a dirty whore," Gongo interrupts, and his friends giggle like schoolgirls. Crystal turns from her couch seat to face him, but not immediately. First she blinks.

"So I'm a dirty whore?"

"You're a dirty whore." Not ho. *Whore.*

"You know, that's interesting, because I actually like to be called a dirty whore when I'm in bed with men. It gets me hot," she says, and doesn't blink. "So that would make sense. Oh well." Crystal sits back and crosses her arms. "I'm just saying, keep it real. Sticks and stones may break my bones...label, label, label."

Crystal recently completed film studies at New York University, where she wrote psychological shorts about dolls and two others: *Niggas Don't Love You* and *White Men Don't Love You Either*. "Everyone gets hurt in both films," she says. "Everyone gets hurt all the time."

In the relationship between artist and groupie, women offer their bodies and men use status and shiny toys as bait. Nothing personal. As Crystal says, "Love is about love. This is something else." In this arrangement, the question becomes, what, if anything, is compromised? Crystal has some idea. "One time," she says slowly, "I sorta got into this situation," she continues, choosing her words carefully, "where I got really fucked up and I think a whole bunch of people fucked me. So, you know," she says, lifting an eyebrow, "rape is pretty compromising."

That was two years ago, in New York, in a club she'd rather not name. What she will say is that there were lots of bip hop artists present. "A lot of mean dick-sucking goes on," she begins, kind of cryptically, "but not all of it is consensual. I try to think that rape is never my fault and move past it." Later she will admit, casually, that "lots of people get raped; it was just a part of my destiny."

Some of this is about the music, as violence and disrespect condoned in one form can only lead to violence and disrespect condoned in another. Some of this, however, is part of the deal. The adoration of celebrity is hero worship. And to worship a hero is to trade part of yourself for something that's not real. A bip bop groupie sacrifices herself to the heightened emotionalism, eroticism, and rhythm of colored men who think themselves gods. In exchange, the groupie, when picked, gets to feel like the Chosen One.

That, to Crystal, is exactly the point.

"When he comes through I think I'm in a fucking rap video," she says of her current rapper boyfriend. "I've got the fly lingerie. Crazy shit is jumping off." She pauses. "Unless you've been around people who are so powerful, you don't understand why it's such an aphrodisiac. When you're around a man and everybody around him is sweating him. [Getting with him.] All day long. That's *hot*." A flick of a cigarette, a crossing of arms. "And that's *that*."



Mekhi Phifer stands and delivers.

CAN'T A BROTHER GET NO LOVE ?

Mekhi Phifer, Omar Epps, and Taye Diggs all have what it takes to be superstars: talent, drive, and sex appeal. So why aren't they pulling in the *Titanic* roles and the blockbuster bank? *Jeannine Amber* is hot and bothered.

They are the stuff of late-night, under-the-covers fantasies, these three kings. Dark skin, broad smiles, big hands, and oh those kissable lips.

This one here, this Omar fellow, he's the slick one. Playing against Tupac Shakur in *Juice*, he seemed sensitive and thoughtful. But in real life? Different story. He's tightly wound. Like if you made him mad he'd punch a wall, and if you turned him on he'd throw you up against one. He's something a little dangerous.

And that one there, that pretty boy Taye, who blessed us with a view of his magnificent backside in *How Stella Got Her Groove Back*, is, in person, ramrod-straitlaced: pulls out the chair, dabs his mouth with a napkin, could charm the pants off your grandmother. If he were your sister's man, you'd tease her, "Marry him, or I will."

And this third prince, Mekhi. He's got long eyelashes and a big-grin, little-kid face. In the romantic comedy *Soul Food*, director George Tillman Jr. captured his sheepish, naughty-boy sexiness. Lay him in your lap, rub his head, and give him something sweet to suck on. He inspires that let-me-be-your-mama instinct, 'cuz he looks like mischief.

All this flavor, and talent too. Between them, Omar Epps, 26, Mekhi Phifer, 24, and Taye Diggs, "twenty-something," have 15 films to their credit and are set to star in an impressive 10 more in the next year, including *The Wood* and *In Too Deep*, which open this month (see "Gotta Give 'Em Credit," page 132). They've played hotties and husbands, hustlers and cops, and *Newsweek* calls them "promising...up-and-comers." But what mainstream Hollywood seems to have missed is that with their bad-boy, good-boy, baby-boy sex appeal, these men make up a holy trinity of female fantasy. With the right *Titanic*-like role, the right airbrushed promo poster, the right teen-beat marketing, they could easily be big-screen heartthrobs. And in Tinseltown, when the ladies love you you're box-office gold.

There's just one hitch: Hollywood, which specializes in white-on-white Academy Awards, is still scared to death of a young black man who can make the ladies swoon. When it comes to movie heroes—the ones who save the day, get the girl, make us wish our dates were cuter—vanilla treats are all we're

PHOTOGRAPHED BY ROBERT MAXWELL FEBRUARY 12, 1998, TOPANGA CANYON, CALIFORNIA

STYLING BY NOEL CIANCI FOR REX; HAIR BY ROB MATTHEWS/RELATIVITY OF STYLE; GROOMING BY LIANI THOMPSON. VINTAGE SLEEVELESS COVERALLS: WHITE SLEEVELESS T-SHIRT BY OKNY; BOOTS BY TIMBERLAND

given. Brad Pitt, with his washboard stomach; Matt Damon, with his mile-wide smile; Leonardo DiCaprio, with the boat. But just try to think of one young black man who has been billed as a dreamboat in a big-budget film made by white Hollywood. Will Smith? Strictly cute and cuddly. Cuba Gooding Jr.? A rah-rah cheerleader. Wesley Snipes? A hardbody renegade. Eddie Murphy? Martin Lawrence? Chris Rock? Chris Tucker? All good for a laugh.

Even Denzel Washington, the finest of the lot, has been cast time and again as choirboy-chaste, despite scenes that cry out for some steam—think Alan J. Pakula's *The Pelican Brief* (Warner Bros., 1993) and Penny Marshall's *The Preacher's Wife* (Buena Vista, 1996). Although colleagues have said that it's Washington himself who shies away from sex scenes, the reticent star heats up the screen as the romantic Demetrius in Mira Nair's *Mississippi Masala* (Black River, 1991) and as the horn-blowing ladies' man Bleek Gilliam in Spike Lee's *Mo' Better Blues* (Universal, 1990)—both films directed by people of color.

"Black directors see the [sex] appeal of black men and make films that showcase it," says Donald Bogle, film historian and author of *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies & Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Film* (Continuum, 1998). "I think for the most part, white directors and writers don't see that [appeal]. This becomes a problem in many of the careers of these young black actors."

Brian Robbins, who directed hot stuff James Van Der Beek in *Varsity Blues* (MTV Films, 1999), says that unless a film is a comedy, "it's almost impossible to get a Hollywood movie made with a [young] black lead. I'm not necessarily saying the studios are racist. It just doesn't work for them economically. A movie like *love jones* [New Line, 1997], which I loved, didn't make a lot of money. But comedies work because they're accessible—they cross over. Will Smith is the ultimate example [of success], but even he hasn't been a romantic lead in a movie."

Taye Diggs looks serious and smart in his little silver octagon glasses. He's leaning back in a booth in the dining room of the Valencia Hyatt, about an hour north of Los Angeles, his muscle-man shoulders bulging through his white, long-sleeve waffle tee.

Diggs, who grew up in Rochester, N.Y., is in Valencia—a white-bread California suburb that has nothing going on except the Magic Mountain amusement park—to film *The House on Haunted Hill*, which opens this fall. Diggs's role is a supporting one with not much opportunity for him to sizzle like he did as Angela Bassett's young love in *Stella* (directed by African-American Kevin Sullivan).

"If [mainstream Hollywood] needs to cast a sexy guy, they automatically think sexy *white* guy. That's just how Hollywood is," says Diggs, whose first big break was on Broadway in the Pulitzer Prize–winning *Rent*.

"In this movie my character's name is Eddie Moses. And my agent's like, 'This is great because it wasn't written 'black.'" But I'm an ex-ballplayer saying stuff like, 'Yo, where we gon' go?' Like I know so many white guys named Eddie Moses who talk like this." Diggs leans back and whistles. "So you just go with the flow and take the best. It's almost not fair because you know Brad Pitt has other things to worry about."

No doubt, screen idols Pitt, DiCaprio, and Damon, as well as newcomers Van Der Beek, Ryan Phillippe (*Cruel Intentions*, Columbia, 1999), and Freddie Prinze Jr. (*She's All That*, Miramax, 1999), must worry about how they're going to cart their loot to the bank. Because in Hollywood, heartthrobs get *paid*.

Top moneymaker DiCaprio, for example, may have won critical acclaim playing the mentally challenged Arnie in *What's Eating Gilbert Grape?* (Paramount, 1993), but it wasn't until millions of women watched him go down in a mist of sea foam that he could command top dollar. In the wake of the $283 million–grossing *Titanic* (20th Century Fox, 1997), the star's rumored per-flick asking price has rocketed from $2.5 million to more than $20 million. Even though DiCaprio appears to be making an effort to lose his sexy-boy image by starring in offbeat flicks like Danny Boyle's upcoming *The Beach* (20th Century Fox), he's still proof of what studio execs have known ever since they put Clark Gable's name above the marquee: Sex sells. And unless an actor has access to the hottest roles, he can get stuck under the financial glass ceiling.


Omar Epps, sitting pretty

HOLLYWOOD IS STILL SCARED TO DEATH OF A YOUNG BLACK MAN WHO CAN MAKE THE LADIES SWOON.

"I'd be making a whole lot more money if I was a white actor," says Omar Epps, "and everybody fuckin' knows that." Late one Friday night, Epps is sitting on an overstuffed maroon sofa at his friend's Beverly Hills apartment drinking vodka and juice. The place is not luxurious but it does have white carpeting, so Epps has his shoes off, and he's got pretty nice feet. He's also got 11 tattoos above the waist and one down below. "Maybe if I was white I would have known that *Titanic* was even being *made*." For a while, in 1997, Epps, who grew up in Brooklyn, carted around a clipboard and stethoscope as the young Dr. Dennis Gant on NBC's *ER*. After 10 episodes, his character buckled under the pressure and jumped in front of a subway train.

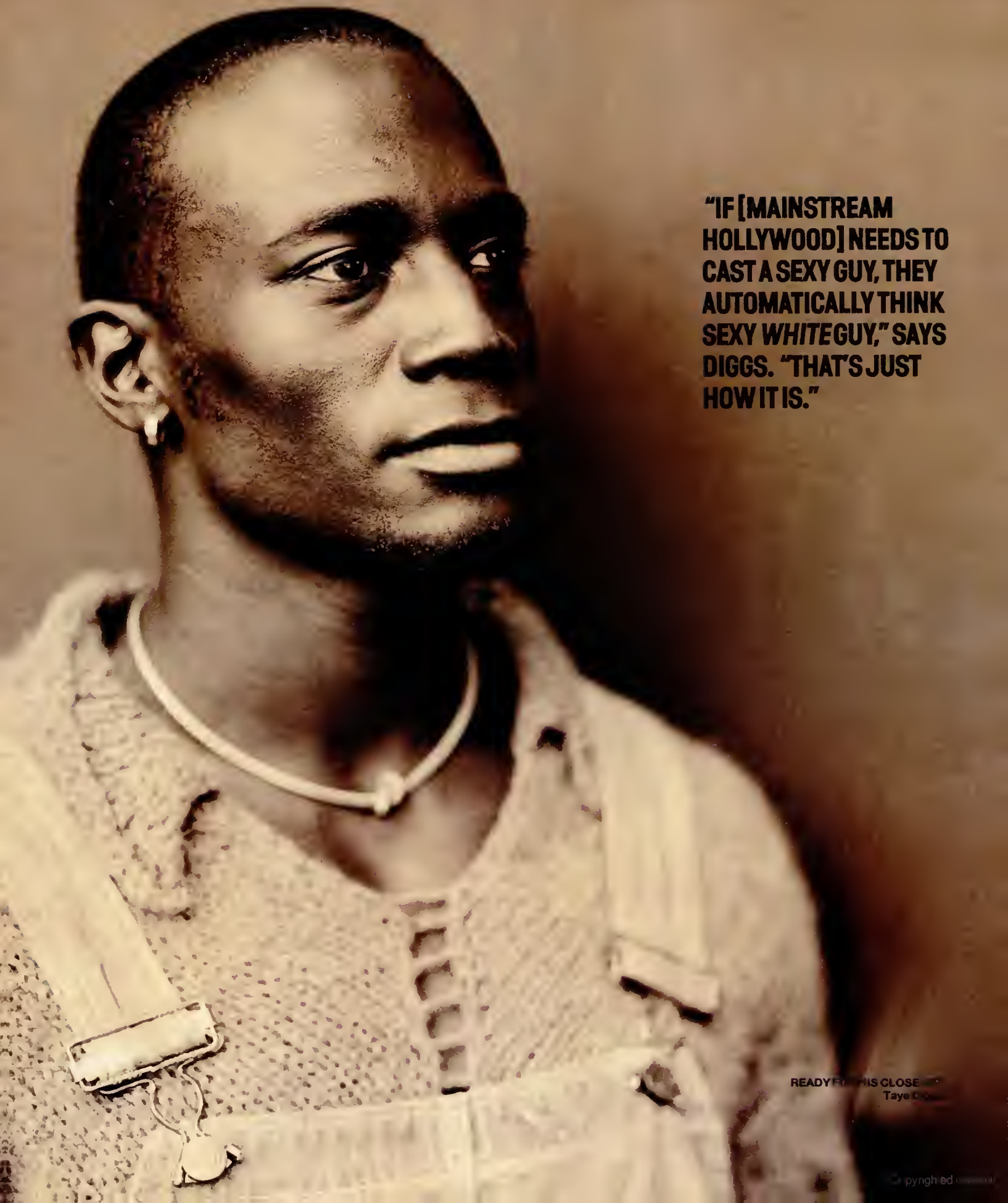
This month, Epps will be starring with Diggs and Richard T. Jones in *The Wood*, a sweet coming-of-age flick that may help to rehabilitate his reputation after the abysmal *The Mod Squad*. But with a cast of relative newcomers, the low-budget *Wood* is not likely to make Epps a superstar.

"White people rule the fucking world, not just Hollywood. That's the way it is," says Epps. "White women all over the world want to see *Legends of the Fall* [TriStar, 1994]," he says. "And it's not just white women. You got all these sisters talking about, 'We need to see more black men!' But then they go out there and support all the Leos. It's about what they've been taught they want to see. Just like they open up a magazine and see Lil' Kim with blond hair and think that's attractive."

Ever since D.W. Griffith directed *Birth of a Nation* in 1915 (in which order is restored to a southern community after a bunch of sheet-wearing whites defend their women from the wild Negroes), Hollywood has grappled with its portrayal of black men as sexual beings. There's been fascination and there's been fear. That tension has produced a cinematic history filled with images of black men as ghetto pimps, jungle bucks, or dancing eunuchs—rarely as someone for a grown woman to love.

"I think the slogan 'Fear of a Black Planet' is not too broad when you look at Hollywood," says Clyde R. Taylor, professor of Africana Studies at New York University and author of *The Mask of Art: Breaking the Aesthetic Contract—Film and Literature* (Indiana

ON EPPS: IVORY KNIT SWEATER BY OLIVER TWIST. JEANS BY HELMUT LANG. VINTAGE HAT AND BOOTS. ON DIGGS: OVERALLS BY KICKIES. STONE SWEATER BY OLIVER TWIST



"IF [MAINSTREAM HOLLYWOOD] NEEDS TO CAST A SEXY GUY, THEY AUTOMATICALLY THINK SEXY *WHITE* GUY," SAYS DIGGS. "THAT'S JUST HOW IT IS."

READY FOR HIS CLOSE-UP
Taye Diggs

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University Press, 1998). "The society has a certain idea of what a hero should be, and that's always been white, male, and young."

Tracey Edmonds, executive producer of *Soul Food*, says most of the scripts her company, Edmonds Entertainment, has been offered to develop "are about the music industry or drugs or gang warfare. The studios just aren't trying to place young black actors in a Brad Pitt role because they don't think it's what the audience wants to see."

When directors do try to make a romantic film with a young African-American lead, they almost never do as well as the $43 million–grossing *Soul Food*, which starred Vanessa L. Williams and cost $7.5 million to make. *How Stella Got Her Groove Back* cost $20 million to produce but only grossed $37 million. The black-on-black romance *love jones*, which starred Larenz Tate, took in only $12 million, and although Christopher Cherot's *Hav Plenty* was considered an indie success for attracting major-studio distribution, it raked in only $2.3 million. Hollywood has learned that movies about colored folks in love are not sure bets at the box office. And with these films floundering, it's tough for a young black actor to make millions of moviegoing women fall head over heels.

"The questions distributors always ask themselves is, how will this play in the suburbs, how will this play in the South?" says director Tony Cinciripini (*Confessions of a Hit Man*, Hemdale Home Video, 1994). Two years ago, Cinciripini shot a movie called *Hell's Kitchen*, a powerful, gritty film about a ragtag group of New York youths caught in a robbery gone wrong. The film stars Mekhi Phifer as Johnny Miles, a tough but noble young man who takes the fall for his friends. At the center of the film is a love story between Johnny and his beautiful white girlfriend, played by rising star Angelina Jolie.

"When I was shopping the script, I was offered $15 million to make this picture with a white actor," says Cinciripini from his office in Los Angeles. "I said, 'Fuck you' and walked out. After that I was considered stupid for having missed this business opportunity." *Hell's Kitchen*, which Cinciripini shot with $6 million he raised himself, generated good buzz at the Toronto Film Festival where it premiered last September. It has yet to be picked up for major-studio distribution.

But it's not just Hollywood that has a problem with on-screen miscegenation. One industry insider who didn't want to be named recalls a 1998 advance screening in New York City for Spike Lee's *He Got Game* (Touchstone): "When Denzel [Washington] leaned in to kiss Milla Jovovich, a black woman in the audience got up and was like, *'Denzel, you promised!'* Denzel is sort of a knight in shining armor for the black community. So some black women react very adversely to the idea that he is 'choosing' a white woman over them. They didn't want to see it."

On page 132 of the coffee-table photography book *Body & Soul: The Black Male Book* (Universe, 1998), there is a picture of Mekhi Phifer, shirtless. He's staring straight into the camera, his thumbs hooked in the waistband of his baggy pants. It's a hot shot, and the real Mekhi looks at it quizzically.

You look very sexy.

"Really? What makes this sexy?"

He isn't fishing, he genuinely wants to know. He also wants to know whether that scene in *Soul Food* where he pushes Nia Long up against the wall in the beauty salon is offensive. He's concerned because he spends a lot of time thinking about his image. Four years ago, Phifer, who grew up in Harlem, was planning to go to college to study electrical engineering, when, on a whim, he went to an open call for Spike Lee's hoodlum epic, *Clockers*. He got the lead. Now here he is, studying a half-naked picture of himself over dinner at Gary's Jamaican Hot Pot, a tiny joint on Adam Clayton Powell Boulevard, a few blocks from where he was raised. Outside the restaurant, three little girls see him and tap on the window. Phifer looks up. The girls scream and run away.

This fall, Phifer is going to be starring in *O*, a modern adaptation of Shakespeare's passion-filled drama *Othello*. "I love the story," says Phifer. "You see this character go from being a cool, calm guy to this guy who winds up going crazy. I always wanted to play somebody like that. Like a love-story type of thing."

In *O*, Phifer's character is more tragic than heroic, but it *is* a love story nonetheless, backed by a major film company and aimed at a mainstream audience. Maybe this is the beginning of a change. Not just for Phifer, Diggs, and Epps to win the roles that might get them paid, but also for a generation of moviegoers who want to take home a new Hollywood fantasy. There he is now, that smooth, brown-skinned brother, looking hot, saving the day, and making *all* the ladies swoon. ☑

Additional research by Kenya N. Byrd

GOTTA GIVE 'EM CREDIT

H-town may not be offering Mekhi, Omar, and Taye heartthrob roles, but between them they've still managed to bank 15 films—and counting. *By Kenya N. Byrd*

MEKHI PHIFER

RÉSUMÉ

- *I Still Know What You Did Last Summer* (Columbia, 1998)
- *Soul Food* (20th Century Fox, 1997)
- *Hav Plenty* (Miramax, 1997)
- *High School High* (TriStar, 1996)
- *Girl 6* (20th Century Fox, 1996)
- *Clockers* (Universal, 1995)

COMING ATTRACTIONS

- *Hell's Kitchen* (Unapix, 1999)

Call it *Rocky* with a twist: Phifer stars as Johnny Miles, an aspiring boxer who spends five years in the pen after taking the rap for a robbery gone bad. But his trouble doubles when he's released and discovers that his girlfriend, Gloria (Angelina Jolie), is plotting his murder.

- *O* (Dimension, 1999)

High school basketball star Odin James (Phifer) is the Othello for Generation X. He and a teammate, the Iago-esque Hugo (Josh Hartnett), go head-to-head for the affection of Desi (Julia Stiles), a modern-day Desdemona.

- *The Other Brother* (Xenon, 1999)

Martin Blaze (Phifer) is a loner who hasn't dated in more than a year. His brother, Junnie (Andre Blake), is the opposite: a self-proclaimed Casanova who decides to teach Martin how to be a player. Will Junnie's lesson work?

OMAR EPPS

RÉSUMÉ

- *The Mod Squad* (MGM, 1999)
- *Scream 2* (Miramax, 1997)
- *Don't Be a Menace to South Central While Drinking Your Juice in the Hood* (Miramax, 1996)
- *Higher Learning* (Columbia, 1995)
- *Major League II* (Warner Bros., 1994)
- *The Program* (Lauren Film, 1993)
- *Juice* (Paramount, 1992)

COMING ATTRACTIONS

- *Love and Basketball* (New Line, 1999)

Quincy McCall (Epps) and his on-again/off-again girlfriend, Monica (Sanaa Lathan), have been playing basketball and hanging out since they were 10 years old. But when the NBA and WNBA recruit the lovebirds, everything changes.

- *The Wood* (Paramount, 1999)

(See Taye Diggs)

- *Breakfast of Champions*

Walt Disney is in negotiations to pick up this film, which is based on Kurt Vonnegut's 1973 satirical novel of the same title. Epps and Bruce Willis costar.

- *In Too Deep* (Miramax, 1999)

Cincinnati cop Jeff Cole (Epps) goes undercover to investigate a drug lord named God (L.L. Cool J) but gets temporarily pulled off the case after having one too many brushes with death. When Jeff returns to the job, he becomes so consumed by the hustler lifestyle that he begins living the part.

TAYE DIGGS

RÉSUMÉ

- *Go* (TriStar, 1999)
- *How Stella Got Her Groove Back* (20th Century Fox, 1998)

COMING ATTRACTIONS

- *The Wood* (Paramount, 1999)

To marry or not to marry is Roland's (Diggs) dilemma hours before his wedding. His boys Mike (Epps) and Slim (Richard T. Jones) come to Roland's rescue, and the three spend an afternoon reminiscing about their pubescent macking days. Will the groom jump the broom?

- *Best Man* (Universal, 1999)

Author Harper Stewart (Diggs) is a best man with a big secret. At his buddy Lane's (Morris Chestnut) wedding, a bridesmaid (Nia Long) gets an advance copy of Harper's sexy new novel—and discovers the characters are all too real.

- *The House on Haunted Hill* (Warner Bros., 1999)

In a remake of the 1958 Vincent Price horror flick, ex-ballplayer Eddie Moses (Diggs) gets an offer he can't refuse: Spend a night in a remodeled asylum and win a million bucks. Geoffrey Rush, Famke Janssen, and Chris Kattan costar.

- *Mary Jane's Last Dance* (MGM, 1999)

College senior Alicia (Mia Kirshner) joins a snobbish clique of girls—played by Meredith Monroe, Rachel True, and Dominque Swain—and ends up in the hospital. It's up to Sheriff Artie Bonner Jr. (Diggs) to crack the case.

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COOL LIKE THAT

This summer the *real* tastemakers are racking DENIM and DIAMONDS—because they are classic and last forever—with Far Eastern and hip hop styles, because that's what's hat!

Photographs by Marc Baptiste; Styling by Emil Wilbekin

Vintage black Asian print smoking jacket; gray cotton tank top by Tommy Hilfiger; cargo jeans by Tommy Jeans; diamond Star of David pendant, Ronson's own; diamond watch by Cartier.
Face & Body: Fragrance, Freedom for him by Tommy Hilfiger

MARK RONSON: "I, VIRGO, N.Y.C. ... TIMELESS—TIGHT, BAGGY ... EVER," SAYS THE NEW YO... DENIM IS THAT ... ALL I NEED IS ... FAVORITE PAIR OF BLUE JEANS, MY DIAMOND STAR, AND SOME EARTH, WIND ... RK SOME MAGIC ON ANY ...

MAKEUP BY GREG VAUGHAN FOR L'ATELIER N.Y.C. HAIR BY TIM CRESPIN FOR JED ROOT INC. PROP STYLING BY PETER GANGAGUANO FOR ARTISTS



Denim string bikini by Phat Farm; diamond and gold earrings, ring, and bracelets, all by Fred Leighton, N.Y.C.

MODEL: 24, ARIES, L.A. "DENIM IS CASUAL AND CHIC IN ONE," SAYS THE ACTRESS/RECORD EXEC AND DAUGHTER OF MUSIC LEGEND AND VIBE FOUNDER QUINCY JONES. SHE APPEARS IN THIS SUMMER'S INDIE FILM *BLACK & WHITE* (BIGEL/NAILER FILMS). "IT'S CLASS TRANSVESTITE, MEANING IT MIGHT LOOK BUNNY BUT IT MIGHT COST MORE THAN THREE PAIRS OF SHOES—*AND* NOT THE CHEAP ONES. SO PEOPLE, ROCK YOUR DENIM."



Denim western shirt by Levi's; diamond pendant and stud earring, Slick Rick's own

Ricky Walters, a.k.a. Slick Rick: 34, Capricorn, N.Y.C. "Denim gives off a casual look th[illegible] if done right, can come off sexy," says the hip hop icon, whose single "Street Talkin'" [illegible] OutKast, is blowing up the airwaves. "The hard, dark texture has its own mystique, w[illegible]cn adds to an individual's own physical lure."

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KIM PORTER: 24, SAGITTARIUS, N.Y.C. "DENIM IS EASY, COMFORTABLE, AND TIMELESS," SAYS THE MODEL/ACTRESS, WHO HAS BEEN ENORMOUSLY ASSOCIATED WITH SEAN "PUFFY" COMBS—SHE'S THE MOTHER OF THEIR 1-YEAR-OLD SON, CHRISTIAN COMBS. "YOU CAN DRESS DENIM UP WITH HEELS OR DOWN WITH SNEAKERS."

Women's pocketed stretch denim shirt with metal buttons by Levi's; stretch denim short-shorts by Diesel Style Lab; shoes by Calvin Klein; diamond cross and diamond studded chain, both by Fred Leighton, N.Y.C.

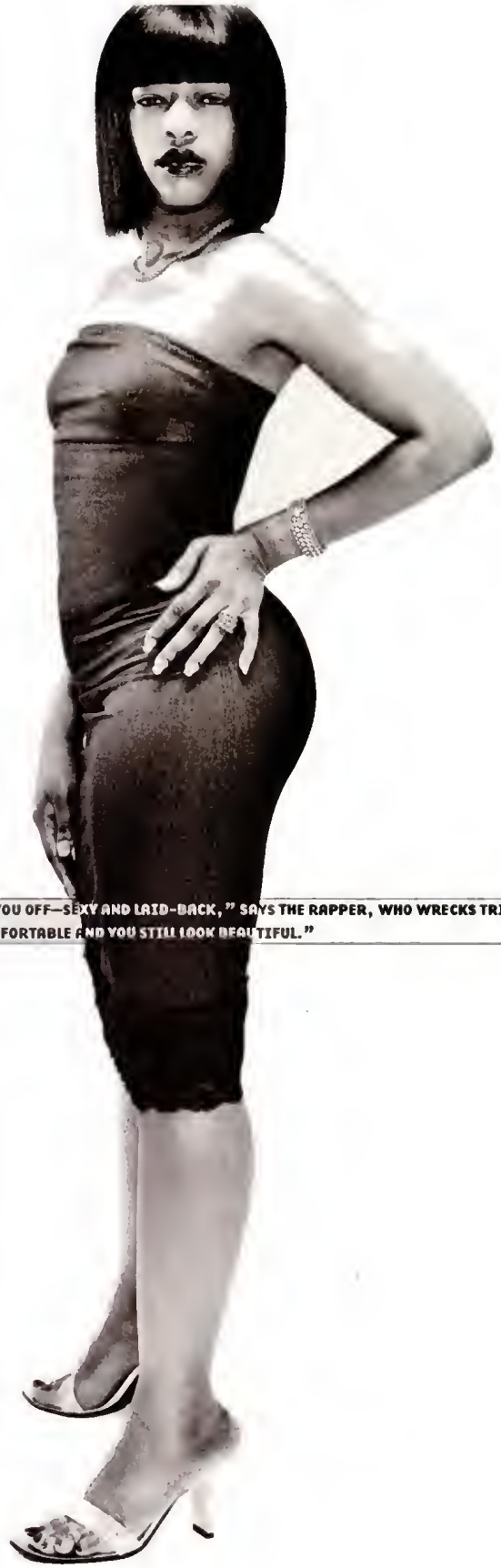


Stretch denim string bikini by Polo Sport by Ralph Lauren; chambray oxford sheets and pillow cases, all by Ralph Lauren Home Collection; shoes by Sergio Rossi; diamond cross necklace and bracelet, both by Fred Leighton, N.Y.C. Face & Body: Fragrance, Ralph Lauren's Romance

GOLDIE: 18, LEO, L.A. "DENIM IS VERSATILE 'CAUSE IT GOES WITH EVERYTHING," SAYS THE STUDENT/MODEL. "I LOVE STRETCH DENIM 'CAUSE IT MAKES YOUR SHAPE LOOK GOOD."

Black rose embroidered kimono coat, property of Dolce & Gabbana Vintage; silver sequin cummerbund and flat front jeans with gray nylon panels, both by D&G Dolce & Gabbana; socks by Champion; slides by Fila; diamond ring by H. Stern.
Face & Body: Fragrance, D&G II Masculine

WILL LENAY: 22, LEO DRAGON, TORONTO/N.Y.C. "I LIKE THE RUGGEDNESS THAT JEANS BRING TO MY PROFILE," SAYS THE MODEL/ACTOR. "PEOPLE ARE WEARING JEANS A LOT NOW BECAUSE OF THE RUGGEDNESS THAT IT BRINGS TO *THEIR* PROFILE. IN FACT, GENIN IS MY NICKLE NAME—SHORT FOR RUFF, RUGGED, AND RAW."



Cotton and Lycra denim tube dress with lace trim by Phat Farm; shoes by Patrick Cox; diamond necklace, bracelet, and ring, all by Fred Leighton, N.Y.C.
Face & Body:
Creme lipstick in Sizzle by Chanel

TRINA: 24, SAGITTARIUS, MIAMI. "JEANS SHOW YOU OFF—SEXY AND LAID-BACK," SAYS THE RAPPER, WHO WRECKS TRICK DADDY'S SINGLE "NANN NIGGA." "THEY GIVE YOU A NATURAL LOOK, NOT TO MENTION THEY'RE VERY COMFORTABLE AND YOU STILL LOOK BEAUTIFUL."

Cream vintage denim classic jacket with front seams and black silk tank top, both by Heimut Lang; platinum and diamond chain with cross, property of Kadi Agüeros

BEN WA: 23, VIRGO ORRGON, QUEBEC/PRRIS. "THERE'S SO MANY DIFFERENT STYLES OF JEANS THAT THERE'S SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE, FROM THE BRBY TO THE GRRMONR—SEVEN TO 77," SRYS THE NOOEL/WRITER. "DENIM IS STILL FOR THE WILD COWBOY...RNORS FOR THE GIRLS—KEEP WEARING IT *TIGHT*."



Gray Rugged Raw vest and Kani football jersey, both by Karl Kani; diamond and platinum Rolex watch, bracelet, necklace with cross, and stud earring, all Kani's own

KARL KANI: 29, TAURUS, [illegible] (BY W[illegible] OF BR[illegible]LYN). "DENIM CAN BE DRESSY OR CASUAL," SAYS THE FASHION DESIGNER, WHO'S BEEN A LEADER IN THE BUSINESS FOR 10 YEARS. "DENIM BRINGS BACK THE ORIGI[illegible]AL FLAVOR OF [illegible]HOP, LIKE UNWASHED DENIM FROM BACK IN THE DAYS. IT'S A RUGGED FABRIC THAT LASTS FOR YEARS—*AND* IT'S AFFOR[illegible]ABLE."



Silk georgette pink organza kimono by Jean Paul Gaultier; denim bikini bottom by GUESS?; denim boots by D&G Dolce & Gabbana; silver and diamond choker and diamond stud earrings, both by H. Stern; denim chair by Tommy Jeans.
SEE THE DETAILS
Face & Body: Fragrance, Extreme Orient by Jean Paul Gaultier Parfums

CRYSTAL HAMMOND: 18, AQUARIUS, N.Y.C. "I LIKE HOW JEANS FIT AND SHOW OFF YOUR SHAPE," SAYS THE STUDENT/MODEL, WHO DOESN'T GET TO WEAR JEANS OFTEN BECAUSE HER CATHOLIC SCHOOL HAS A UNIFORM DRESS CODE. "I LOVE DENIM BECAUSE IT'S SEXY."

DADDY'S BABY

Photographs by Alexei Hay; Styling by Kadi Agneros

My *baby*. My *daddy*. Two terms filled with tenderness, innocence, romance, and love. But combine them and watch the mood switch. "Baby daddy." We hear about him all the time. He always gets the rotten rap: the deadbeat, the no-show, the "biological" that didn't bother. Think B-Rock & the Biz. *Who dat is?* "Just my baby daddy."

So, hip hop has single-handedly introduced a new member to the traditional nuclear family. But where does a baby daddy fit in? To "Be a Father to Your Child" is not just about Little League, PTA meetings, and camping trips. What that pint-size seed really needs is unconditional love and the shared wealth of both parents' triumphs and failures.

Ladies, he may be the one who doesn't return your page. And fellas, he may be the ex who won't leave her alone. But don't tell any of that to the shorties—to them, he's none of the above. He's just Daddy. *Minya Oh*

Reginald Bond Noble Jr., 1, sits atop the shoulders of his father, Redman, on the roof of the Woodside Projects, Queens.

The legendary Funk Doctor Spock Redman may be one of the funniest men in hip hop, bringing his animated humor to tracks like "I'll Bee Dat!" and "Let Da Monkey Out." But when it comes to being a father to his baby boy, Lil' Reggie, the Doc is no joke. According to his manager, James Ellis, parenthood has made the rapper a much more responsible man and has even prompted him to invest in real estate for his son's future. Redman and Reggie Jr. act just like each other, but that doesn't stop Dad from videotaping every moment he shares with his son. So how did this proud poppa celebrate when his lil' man was born last year? "Well, he celebrated in his own way," says Ellis. "Redman went to [his favorite weed spot] and got some weed." An extra-special occasion calls for an extra-special cigar.



Red Rugged Raw denim jeans and jacket, and gray T-shirt, all by Karl Kani; Kids' Red Rugged Raw denim jeans and jacket, and white T-shirt, all by Karl Kani; sneakers by Nike



Shakur al Din, 4, and his dad, Beanie Siegal, on 21st Street and Siegal Avenue in their hometown, South Philadelphia.

In one short year, Beanie Siegal has gone from feeling South Philly's hard knocks to being Jay-Z's hottest Roc-A-Fella stock. Taking a break from touring with Jay-Z, and in the process of recording his fall debut, Siegal enjoys spending the day with his son, with no particular agenda in mind. "Mostly anything I do with my boy. I get a kick out of him," says Siegal, "because I didn't grow up with my dad." He has broken that no-poppa cycle by being there for Shakur from day one. "I cut the umbilical cord and all that. Seeing that will really make you appreciate your girl," he says. "That day changed my life because I wasn't just living for me anymore."



Kids' denim jeans and jacket, both by Phat Farm; yellow cotton T-shirt with horizontal stripes by GUESS?; boots by Timberland; Men's denim shirty suit by Phat Farm; boots by Timberland. **SEE THE DETAILS**

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GEAR
THE REAL GOODS



Air Sunder Max by Nike, $95

Equipment Gazelle by Adidas, $100

ECO Lo by Converse, $80

Air Flightposite by Nike, $160

Ancerus TR by Fila, $65

Cell Lhotse by Puma, $80

sneak peek

Now, we know y'ell just can't hang out in eny old sneekers! That's why we hung up the best joints for fall right here on this page! Since comfort, function, and color is key for survival in the urban jungle, treil runners (Pume's Cell Lhotse end Fila's Ancerus TR) ere the hottest new category. But don't sleep on basketball (Nike's Air Flightposite) or running (Adidas's Equipment Gezelle), 'cause they're still in the geme too. Toss it up, toss it up! SEE THE DETAILS

Mimi Valdés



Triple 5 Soul

Kenneth Cole

Coach

Prada

Perry Ellis

Caller ID

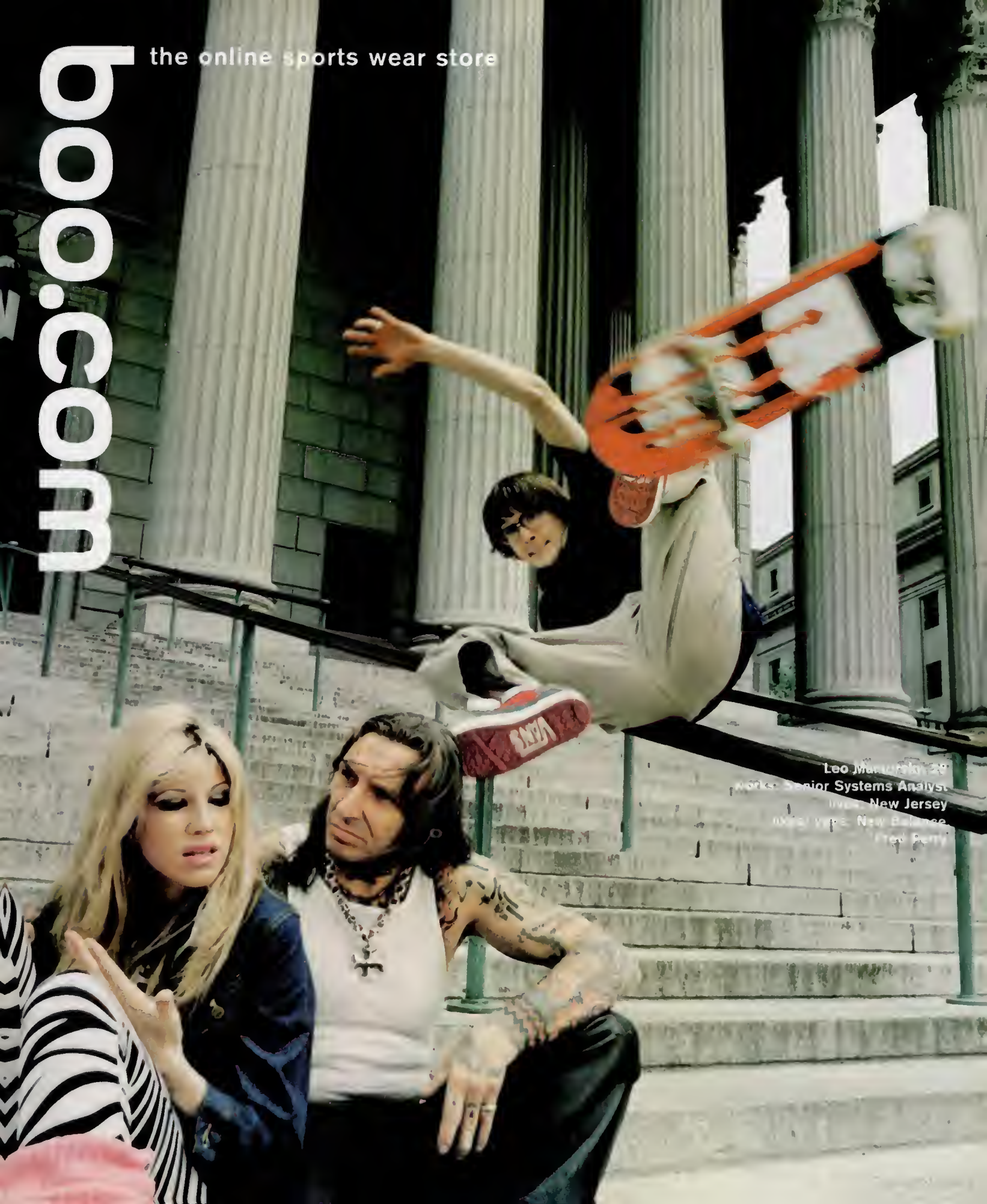
For all you cell-phone junkies, here's the latest accessory to hook up your celly, your way: the mobile telephone case. From Triple 5 Soul's camouflage cover that hangs around your neck to Coach's and Kenneth Cole's fine leather versions that include handy wrist straps, these covers are all about communication chic. Holler if ya hear me. SEE THE DETAILS *E.W.*

scoop

food for fierce fashionistas

Tommy! Tommy! Tommy! Just like the 1975 rock opera, the designer with the same name (last name Hilfiger, *of course*) is receiving rave reviews for his all-American-inspired clothing. Now **Tommy Hilfiger** is teking on the world, literally. First he opened his 16,000-square-foot European flagship store in London. His *tommy girl fragrance* is the "spirit" sponsor of the 1999 Lilith Fair. Then Hilfiger will sponsor *tommy's american running series*, a 13-city Fourth of July celebration featuring a series of 3K, 5K, and 10K races (the proceeds will benefit Race to Erase MS). Next there's the Paskowitz Surf Camp, e 21-week summer adventure welcoming potential surfers of all ages and skill levels in Southern Califomia, that Hilfiger is sponsoring for the second yeer in a row. And there's also *Tommy Hilfiger Home*, e new line of bed end bath Americana-style home furnishings. Just when you thought he was done, this fall Mr. Hilfiger will launch *Freedom*, a new scent for men and women that's fresh, natural, and light. Finally, there's *Tommy Hilfiger Color Line*, his foray into cosmetics—also due in the fall—which offers lipsticks in colors like R&B, Acid Jazz, Ska, and Glam Rock, just to name a few. Sounds like it's Tommy's world—or is that Tommy's tune?... IN BRIEF: **Helmut Lang** is now offering a line of optical fremes end sunglesses that ere as modern as his utilitarian clothing... **Meurice Malone** also has created a line of eyewear that compliments his collection of urban clothing.... **American Eagle Outfitters** has teemed up with GT Bicycles to design the AE Extreme Performance Bicycle, an all-terrain bike with a state-of-the-art aluminum frame. It can be purchased through AE's quarterly catalog or by visiting *www.ae-outfitters.com*. Keep it moving! *Emil Wilbekin*

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JENS MORTENSEN


boo.com
the online sports wear store
VANS



[illegible] & Bobbi Foundation, lip gloss, [illegible], and mascara, all by Bobbi Brown Essentials; fragrance, Emporio Armani for her; turquoise and green satin camisole with jeweled closure by Emporio Armani; bracelets by Bal[illegible] Phat. SEE THE DETAILS

Natural Woman

"[illegible]" \na-chə-rəl\ *adj.*: not artificial

"[illegible]" \wů-mən\ *n.*: an adult female person

Hollywood ain't ready for this sister! Malinda Williams possesses a simple beauty and youthfulness that has earned her roles in such films as *High School High* (Columbia TriStar, 1996), *A Thin Line Between Love and Hate* (New Line, 1996), and this summer's *The Wood* (Paramount). The twentysomething fiancée of actor Mekhi Phifer wears pregnancy so well that we just had to divulge her beauty secrets.

[illegible] "If I have makeup on I use Phisoderm to take it off. Otherwise, I just wipe my face with water because soap takes the natural oils from your skin. I've never had a facial, but once a week I use a strawberry scrub by St. Ives."

[illegible] "I'm not addicted. I don't get dolled up to run to the corner store."

[illegible] "I don't wear my hair the same for too long. I don't have a relaxer, but when I want it straight I press it."

[illegible] "One time I was working on a show and the makeup actually gave me a fungus! So I experimented and discovered Bobbi Brown. Since then, I bring my own makeup to every project."

[illegible] "I like to exfoliate my entire body with a loofah and wash with products by Origins. One is a mint wash and the other is charcoal. Afterward, I apply this Origins salt scrub. It gets my blood circulating. Then I moisturize with Lubriderm."

[illegible]

"I can't *stand* the eyeliner on the top eyelid that's dragged out past the corner. It's real '80s, real Rae Dawn Chong. Unless you were going for the Cleopatra look, leave it alone!"

Kenya N. Byrd

PHOTOGRAPH BY ISABEL SNYDER FOR L.A. CONTACT; STYLING BY EMIL WILBEKIN. MAKEUP BY KARA YOSHIMOTO FOR CELESTINE. HAIR BY JOHN SETARO FOR CLOUTIER


EVERY MAN HAS HIS
FAVORITE TOOL.
New!
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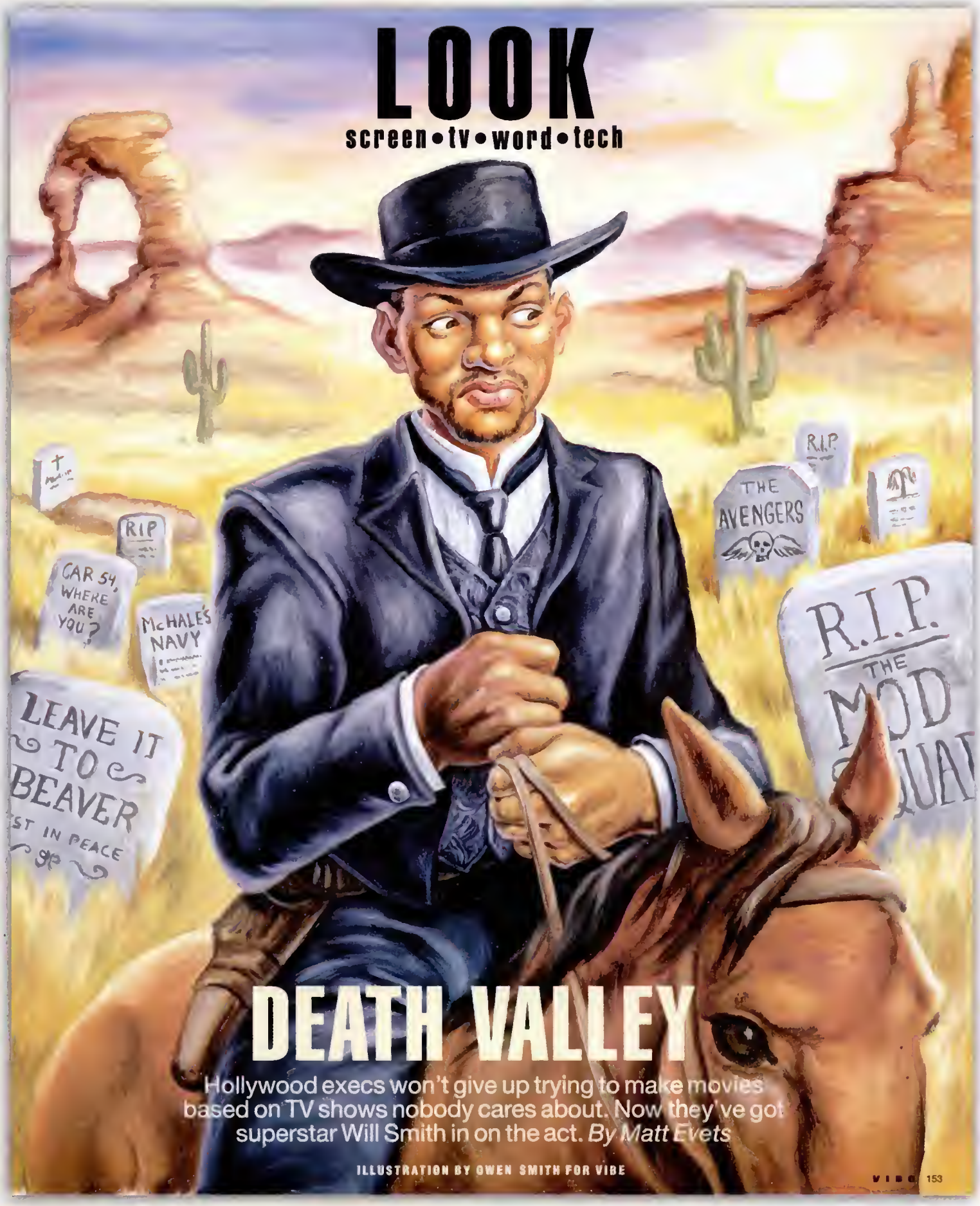


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DEATH VALLEY

Hollywood execs won't give up trying to make movies based on TV shows nobody cares about. Now they've got superstar Will Smith in on the act. *By Matt Evets*

ILLUSTRATION BY OWEN SMITH FOR VIBE

This month Will Smith will be riding into the *Wild Wild West* (Warner Bros.) as the baddest Hollywood cowboy of the '90s. Smith's pockets are jingling with cash and his rep is as big as the Montana sky: His last three films have grossed a mind-blowing $1.5 *billion*; *Big Willie Style* (Columbia) sold more than 6 million copies; and he's reportedly set to play the King of the World, Muhammad Ali, in the upcoming biopic *Ali* (Sony). But is the Fresh Prince riding for a fall? If the early word on his latest flick is any indication, the answer might be yes.

The buzz on the reportedly $160 million *West*–a fantasy Western based on the cult TV show from the late '60s–has been mostly negative. Columnists have snickered about the film's "uh-oh factor," and one Internet spy who caught an early screening called the film "mediocre at best." Amid the swirling rumors, director Barry Sonnenfeld has shot "extensive" additional scenes to add more laugh lines to the July 2 release, in which Smith plays a government agent who must protect President Ulysses S. Grant from assassination.

It may be that Smith is falling victim to the jinx of the TV-show-inspired film. There have been few successful TV-to-big screen adaptations, among them *Batman* (Warner Bros., 1989), *Mission Impossible* (Paramount, 1996), and *The Mask of Zorro* (Columbia TriStar, 1998), all of which grossed well over $100 million. But most films made from TV series–*Car 54, Where Are You?* (Columbia TriStar, 1994), *Flipper* (Universal, 1996), *Leave It to Beaver* (Universal, 1997), *McHale's Navy* (Universal, 1997), *The Avengers* (Warner Bros., 1998), and most recently *The Mod Squad* (MGM, 1999)–have lost millions at the box office. So why do Hollywood execs keep pumping out multimillion-dollar extravaganzas based on TV shows that were popular before moviegoing teens were even born? And how come no one has put Kid "Dy-no-mite" on the big screen?

"Some Hollywood execs are just trying to relive those years when they were young and hip," says Eleonore Snow, a senior editor at MrShowbiz.com, a leading film website. "But there's a vital missing link for today's audiences–the movies don't include anything fresh for the new generation."

Despite the spotty track record of the TV-to-film formula, studio execs keep returning to the trough hoping to find another *Mission Impossible* (which grossed more than $400 million worldwide), says Dan Cox, who covers the film industry for *Variety*. "There's a lack of any original material in Hollywood right now," says Cox. "And studios believe that they have a built-in audience for these films: baby boomers who saw their originals, and their kids, who saw the repeats on Nick at Nite."

When studio heads couple young, hip talent with TV classics, "they think they have the perfect formula," says one Hollywood executive, who didn't want to be named. "But people who watched *The Mod Squad* in the '60s aren't necessarily interested in seeing Claire Danes today."

There have been so many films made from TV shows lately that it seems Hollywood is actually running out of programs to recycle. Current straight-from-the-tube projects being considered range from the potentially fabulous (*Charlie's Angels*, with Cameron Diaz, Drew Barrymore, and a yet-to-be-named third) to the probably pathetic (*The Six Million Dollar Man*). "Studios will even send people out to a mall and say, 'Would you rather see *The Brady Bunch* movie or a *Flipper* movie?'" says Cox. "Then they treat the results as the gospel. It's ridiculous."

But even with the film industry scraping the bottom of the prime-time barrel, iconic shows featuring black actors, like *Good Times*, *The Jeffersons*, and *What's Happening!!*, aren't even on Hollywood's radar. Movie execs still consider black films to be a niche market with a very limited profit potential. "A film like [the Queen Latifah/Jada Pinkett-Smith vehicle] *Set It Off* was considered a huge black hit, and yet the studio probably only made $5 million off that picture," says Cox. "Whereas you can make $300 million off of something like *The Matrix* [Warner Bros., 1999]." The lack of foreign distribution for black films–New Line's *Set It Off* (1996), for example, didn't even open in most European countries–further erodes the potential for black films.

"STUDIOS WILL EVEN SEND PEOPLE OUT TO A MALL AND SAY, 'WOULD YOU RATHER SEE *THE BRADY BUNCH* MOVIE OR A *FLIPPER* MOVIE?' THEN THEY TREAT THE RESULTS AS THE GOSPEL. IT'S RIDICULOUS."

But Hollywood does take one thing seriously: star power. If Chris Tucker, who blew up box offices with last year's $141 million–grossing *Rush Hour* (New Line), wanted to do a *What's Happening!!* movie, a studio might sign on, says Cox. "Studios would gladly look to him to carry a film the way they would Jim Carrey."

If getting a Chris Tucker or a Will Smith to back a film is the only way we're going to see J.J. Evans on the big screen, maybe Will should forget the wild West and head straight for the projects.

LET THE GOOD TIMES ROLL

Hollywood is so busy making who-cares TV shows into big-budget films, it seems to be missing the *real* small-screen gems. VIBE picks the boob-tube faves that really deserve the Hollywood treatment.



GOOD TIMES The original: CBS, 1974–1979
NEW CAST: Oprah Winfrey as Florida Evans; O.J. Simpson as James Evans; Chris Tucker as J.J.; Janet Jackson (who played Penny in the original) as Thelma; Fat Joe as Bookman
STORY LINE: Bookman is fatally knifed in a bizarre lovers' quarrel. James sets out to find the *real* killers.



WHAT'S HAPPENING!! The original: ABC, 1976–1979
NEW CAST: Big Pun as Rerun; Snoop Dog as Raj; Left Eye as Dee; Kurupt as Dwayne; Queen Latifah as Shirley
STORY LINE: In the first all-rap musical, the cast has to put on a talent show to save Shirley's diner.



WELCOME BACK, KOTTER The original: ABC, 1975–1979
NEW CAST: Woody Allen as Mr. Kotter; John Travolta reprising his role as Vinnie Barbarino; Adrock (in an Afro wig) as Epstein; Eminem as Horshack; Kobe Bryant as Freddie "Boom-Boom" Washington
STORY LINE: The school is threatened by a dangerous gang of "weirdos." The Sweathogs volunteer to rumble.



SANFORD AND SON The original: NBC, 1972–1977
NEW CAST: Eddie Murphy as Fred; Eddie Murphy as Lamont
STORY LINE: In an act of civic-minded kindness, Fred picks up a transvestite and offers him/her a ride home.

M.E.

GOOD TIMES, WHAT'S HAPPENING!!, WELCOME BACK, KOTTER, SANFORD AND SON ALL PHOTOFEST

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screen

gary dauphin's flick picks

movie review

THE ACID HOUSE (ZEITGEIST)



Based on three short stories from 1996's *Trainspotting* (W.W. Norton & Company) scribe Irvine Welsh, *The Acid House* is a disjointed but oddly engaging first film by newbie director Paul McGuigan. Running roughshod through England's trance-and-'tropes scene, *Acid House* has the distinction of being every parent's nightmare and every out-of-control partier's dream. McGuigan loops together beats, ecstasy trips, bad language, and bruise-inducing sex, with a couple of sci-fi bodily transmutations and one conversation with, like, God for good measure. In the lengthiest and most genuinely bananas of the film's three sequences, a foul-mouthed working-class bully switches bodies with a rich newborn. Hilarity and breast-feeding ensue. *Acid House* is a low-budget indie with plenty of rough edges, but McGuigan uses his limited resources to fill the screen with raw images that capture the hard-edged paranoia of Welsh's prose.

movie review

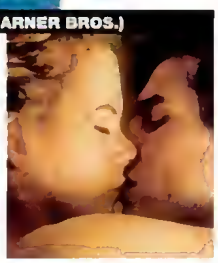
WHITEBOYS (FOX SEARCHLIGHT)



The newest film from award-winning director Marc Levin (*Slam*, Trimark, 1998) tells the story of four corn-fed Caucasians (led by performance artist Danny Hoch) who dream of escaping their farm town by any ghetto means necessary. They write rhymes, guzzle 40-ounces, and smoke weed, but fantasy meets tragedy when they try to set up a drug operation. *Whiteboys* can't decide whether it's a comedy or a serious look at white teen angst, but it does have a clear understanding of how hip hop has been translated (and mutated) into the voice of teen disaffection in America. Too bad this is yesterday's news flash.

movie preview

EYES WIDE SHUT (WARNER BROS.)



In the late Stanley Kubrick's last film, superstar lovebirds Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman take a break from suing the tabloids to play a hypersexual pair of psychologists who try to lend their practices a more, er, personal touch. Hyped as a highbrow porno (think *Last Tango in Paris*, MGM, 1972), *Eyes* was three years in the making thanks to obsessive-compulsive Kubrick, who reportedly demanded up to 50 takes of certain scenes.

movie preview

DEEP BLUE SEA (WARNER BROS.)

Samuel L. Jackson tries to keep himself dry (and uneaten) in this shark-attack thriller, which owes a toothy debt to *Jaws* (Universal, 1975). *Sea* also bites from a more recent Spielberg blockbuster—the sharks being genetically engineered nightmares who escape research pens and go on a *Jurassic Park*–style rampage. L.L. Cool J appears as the research station's cook and tries to avoid becoming a meal himself.



movie preview

THE BLAIR WITCH PROJECT (ARTISAN)

A darling at this year's Sundance Film Festival, *The Blair Witch Project* is a freaked-out mind twister that some have heralded as the most groundbreaking horror flick since 1968's *Night of the Living Dead*. Shot pseudo-documentary style, *Blair* is presented as the unedited tape collected by a trio of college students who unwisely travel to the ruins of a small town known for occult goings-on. One of the summer's best bets.



movie preview

AMERICAN PIE (UNIVERSAL)

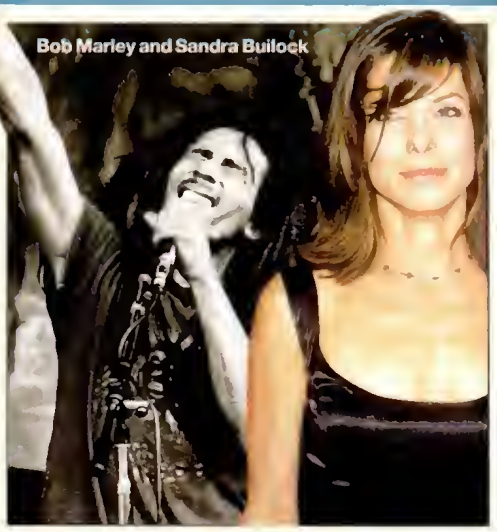


Hoping to re-create the T&A magic of '80s comedies like *Porky's* (20th Century Fox), *American Pie* follows four high school seniors on their quest to get some by prom night (the title refers to a description of what sex feels like—i.e., sticking your finger in warm apple pie). Though rarely rising above the expected fart and fuck jokes, *American Pie* promises one of the most bizarre masturbation scenes in movie history. Kids, don't try this at home.

REEL TO REAL

News from the Hollyweird

by Stephen Rebello



Bob Marley and Sandra Bullock

Industry insiders say that any of the music biz's young male rap stars could be considered for a lead role in Paramount's *Altar Ego*, a film based on Kathy Lette's British novel about a thirtysomething woman who enjoys a sexy time-out with an unforgettable 19-year-old rapper. Although no stars have officially committed to the project, rumor has it that **Julia Roberts** and **Sandra Bullock** might be in the running. How 'bout a piece of **Big Pun**, ladies?

One rapper who's getting plenty of screen time is **Ice Cube**. In addition to starring opposite **George Clooney** and **Mark Wahlberg** in the fall release *3 Kings* (Warner Bros.) and starring, writing, *and* producing the *Friday* sequel, *Next Friday* (New Line), the Predator is set to mack it up in New Line's *Pimp*. Sources say the flick, based on the memoirs of Robert "Iceberg Slim" Beck, the self-styled "world's greatest pimp," will be a no-holds-barred look at Beck's life. Let's just hope this *Pimp* will be more entertaining than the **Albert** and **Allen Hughes'** long-awaited but disappointing documentary, *American Pimp*, which garnered mixed reviews when it screened earlier this year at the Sundance Film Festival.

Perhaps the Hughes brothers will rebound when they shoot *From Hell* (20th Century Fox) this summer in London. Based on Alan Moore and Edward Campbell's brilliant series of illustrated novels about Jack the Ripper's reign of terror, it could attract a killer cast too. **Gary Oldman** and **Catherine Zeta-Jones** have been named as potential stars. An early peek at the screenplay promises the movie will be smart, violent, and dark, dark, dark.

Speaking of darkness, watch for **Denis Leary** to star in and executive-produce an untitled biopic of Eddie Klep, the baseball pitcher and ladies' man who became the first white dude to play in the Negro Leagues.

Lauryn Hill's five-award feat at this year's Grammys has Hollywood execs working overdrive to get her in front of the movie cameras, pronto. The latest rumors have Hill, a former teen star on *As the World Turns*, hoping to catch a fire with her lover, Rohan Marley, in a musical biopic about his father, the late reggae supernova Bob. But it may be too early to lively up ourselves. Sources close to Hill say, "The project doesn't even have a script or director."

THE ACID HOUSE COURTESY OF ZEITGEIST FILMS. WHITEBOYS COURTESY OF FOX SEARCHLIGHT. EYES WIDE SHUT COURTESY OF WARNER BROS. DEEP BLUE SEA COURTESY OF WARNER BROS. THE BLAIR WITCH PROJECT ARTISAN ENTERTAINMENT. AMERICAN PIE VIVIAN ZINK/UNIVERSAL STUDIOS BOB MARLEY GEORGE LANGE/OUTLINE. SANDRA BULLOCK JEFF BLOOMB/OUTLINE


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SUMMER OF DISCONTENT

Spike Lee is in the Hollywood hot seat again with *Summer of Sam*, a '70s saga about a record-breaking heat wave and a killer on the loose. *By Gary Dauphin*



John Leguizamo on the set with Spike

New York auteur Spike Lee's on-screen work is again the source of offscreen drama. After basking in critical and box-office goodwill with *4 Little Girls* (HBO, 1997) and *He Got Game* (Buena Vista, 1998), Lee is raising hackles with his newest project, *Summer of Sam*. The film, which opens this month and stars Mira Sorvino and John Leguizamo, takes place during the scorching heat wave of 1977, when New York City was under assault by serial killer David "Son of Sam" Berkowitz. Last year, the real-life families of Berkowitz's victims picketed Lee's set, charging that the director was exploiting their suffering. And this April, Lee found himself enmeshed in a public war of words with *The Los Angeles Times*, which



"Hey, John, do the right thing!"

printed rumors that *Summer of Sam* might get an NC-17 rating after reporters viewed an incomplete print of the film. Facing down these challenges with his usual bluntness, Lee took a break from putting the final touches on *Sam* to talk to VIBE about the '70s, scandals, and serial killers.

Why are you making a picture about a serial killer?

It's more than that. The film is really about the summer of 1977. It's a significant summer for me because that summer I decided I wanted to be a filmmaker. I was home from Morehouse and didn't have a job, so I bought myself a Super-8 camera and just went around the city filming stuff: street scenes, block parties, DJs hooking up to street lamps and spinning. That summer, disco was at its height, the Yankees were going to the World Series, and it was one of the hottest summers ever. Everybody put their air conditioners on at once, drained [electric company] Con Ed, and we had the blackout. It was just crazy.

What happens to John Leguizamo's and Mira Sorvino's characters in Sam*?*

They play Vinny and Dionna, a recently married Italian-American couple. They live in a little enclave in the Bronx where Son of Sam first struck. In the movie, there's a bunch of guys who think Son of Sam might be from their neighborhood, so they start making a list of all the suspicious characters coming in and out.

You're making a film this time with two Italian-American lead characters. Was that different for you?

Different how?

Well, it's a pretty white cast.

So? Look at what I've done before: [1991's] *Jungle Fever*, [1989's] *Do the Right Thing*. I've worked with Danny Aiello, Harvey Keitel, John Turturro. So I don't feel like I'm on foreign territory. I know this comes up because there aren't that many black people in the film besides myself and Roger Guenveur Smith (who plays a police detective), but I'm a New York filmmaker and this is a New York story.

Before you even began shooting Summer of Sam, *there were people who accused you of profiting from the six Son of Sam killings.*

At an open casting call in the Bronx, the father of one of Son of Sam's victims led a small protest. He felt, and probably still feels, that this film is going to be exploitative. And I can understand that. He's lost a daughter. There's really nothing that I can say to him about *Summer of Sam* that's going to change his viewpoint, given his loss. But I know what the film's about, and it's not about promoting or glamorizing Son of Sam.

Do you see Sam *as more of a period flick than a movie about a serial killer?*

Not exactly a period flick, but it does definitely look like what it is: a film set in 1977. I told everyone associated with the film—from the actors to the costume and production designers—it's not our intention to make fun of this period. People weren't wearing those clothes because they thought it looked funny, they were wearing them because back then that's what looked good! So that's the way I wanted to approach everything.

Was it hard getting people to follow through on that? Everyone today is so used to thinking of the '70s in Brady Bunch terms: funny, wild, and stupid at the same time.

Nah. Once I told everyone what I wanted, we were on the same page. I didn't have to mention it again.

"I'm a New York filmmaker and this is a New York story."





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tv

WILL WORK FOR 'TOONS

VIBE pairs hip hop all-stars with their perfect animated counterparts


TLC 'toon in

Remember *ThunderCats*, *The Care Bears Family*, *G.I. Joe: A Great American Hero*? We've all had at least one in-depth conversation about favorite cartoons we watched as children. You were Spider-Man, web-swinging from your bedposts, or, "By the powers of Grayskull," you battled Skeletor with your dynamic, tin-foil He-Man/She-Ra sword. For some, acting out a favorite cartoon character was an everyday childhood routine. "Wonder Twin powers, activate!" So let's play make-believe. Who would you cast if you could replace today's cartoon characters with celebrity flesh and blood? Some of these parts have already been filled. Check it out:

PHILLIP FRY: "I hate my life! I hate my life!" is the unofficial motto of Fox's *Futurama* star. Once crazy-ass **Eminem** opened his mouth to scream "I just don't give a fuck!" we knew that casting a disturbed white boy from 1999 Detroit to play a depressed character from Y3K New York City wouldn't take much effort.

THE POWER PUFF GIRLS: The Cartoon Network's tiny trio wins our vote as the new "It" chicks of 'toon TV. TLC, LaFace's revamped power grrrl group, were born to play these knee-high crime fighters. "Duh!"—as if there were any doubt. Any group who can make millions of girls sing about not wanting "scrubs" are definitely superheroes in disguise.


The Power Puff Girls don't want no scrubs either

STORM: X-Men's superheroine has a regal presence and powers that can literally blow you away. The only woman queenly enough to fill this Marvel comic role is none other than **Lauryn Hill**. Beauty, brains, and strength—the video for "Ex-Factor" had us sold. *Raqiyah Mays*

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PILOT PILEUP



In TV land, no deal is done until the show's on prime time with a 22-episode buy. With that in mind, check these three UPN show pilots that, if picked up, might make the Un-Popular Network worth watching.

Rochell Thomas

ONE MO' SHOW: Countess Vaughn (right) steps out of Brandy's supersize shadow with *Mo'Nique*, the *Moesha* spin-off on which Mo's sassy best friend, Kim Parker (Vaughn), finally gets a mother, a life, and maybe some respect.

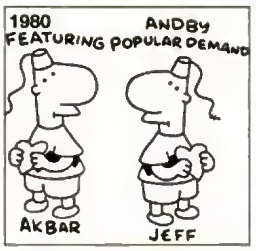
FANTASTIC VOYAGE. A contractor's gig on *Malcolm & Eddie* lands Coolio in a not-quite gangsta paradise called *Daddio*, an *M&E* spin-off on which the wild-haired MC plays a married father of three seeking the best for his working-class brood. Think of *Daddio* as UPN's blue-collar take on NBC's *The Cosby Show*, if you think of it at all.

KUNG FU FRIGHTENING: Hip hop's original gangsta, Ice-T, hopes to raise the prime-time body count with *The Disciples*, a knockoff of CBS's *Martial Law* on which Master T plays *sensei* to a sexy Miami-based quartet of underworld crime-solving female ninjas. We can just hear the Asian community groups fuming already.

ROCK THESE DOODLES DO!

The evolution of a cartoon legacy

Before he was crowned cartoon king of Fox, Matt Groening doodled twisted tales of deranged bunnies in a photocopied comic series called *Life in Hell*. How'd he sketch his way to the top? Check the mad cartoonist's progress from his early escapades to his latest quirky creation.



APRIL 25, 1980: The *Los Angeles Reader* launches *Life in Hell*, a comic strip featuring the offbeat antics of dot-eyed Charlie Brown look-alikes Jeff and Akbar. (*Life* eventually becomes syndicated and spawns a book series.)



APRIL 19, 1987: A crudely drawn Simpsons family debuts on *The Tracey Ullman Show* in a freakish two-minute sketch.



DECEMBER 17, 1989: Fox fans witness the birth of America's longest-running animated prime-time series: *The Simpsons*, a half-hour show featuring a kinder, gentler Simpson clan.



MARCH 28, 1999: *Futurama*, Groening's new 'toon about life in Y3K, captures 19 million viewers—beating out hit shows such as CBS's *Touched by an Angel*.

Brent Fason



CHANNEL SURFER

Bask in the blue glow

OF MICE AND HEARTTHROBS. . .When the pomade-coiffed princes of pop, the Backstreet Boys, postponed their *In Concert* date with Disney last year, 'N Sync gladly danced in and rode the Mickey Mouse–eared exposure to multiplatinum success. But now Backstreet's back, armed with a new CD, *Millennium* (Jive), and hoping their long-awaited *In Concert* set airing July 10 at 7 p.m. (ET/PT) will prove the crooning quintet is more than just a one-year wonder. Are they? No diggity. Some doubt. *R.T.*

TLC: JEN LOWERY/LONDON FEATURES. POWER PUFF GIRLS: COURTESY OF THE CARTOON NETWORK. COUNTESS VAUGHN: COURTESY OF UPN NETWORK. GROENING COMICS: ALL COURTESY OF TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX FILM CORP. BACKSTREET BOYS BY KEVIN MAZUR/LONDON FEATURES

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STEVIE WONDER



Steve Martin has mellowed with age. But that doesn't stop the former wild-and-crazy guy from idolizing Hollywood bad boys, fiending after Janet, or even busting a rhyme. *By Shaheem Reid*

The evolution of a funnyman is the darndest thing. Who would have thought that Steve Martin, the hyperkinetic comedian who won laughs by sporting a fake arrow through his head on *Saturday Night Live* in the '70s, would grow so gracefully into middle age?

Since breaking into Hollywood in the classic comedy *The Jerk* (Universal, 1979) as a nincompoop who'd been raised a "poor black child," Martin has moved decidedly toward the cerebral. His recent collection of humor essays, *Pure Drivel* (Hyperion, 1998), and his duty as a contributor to the venerable *New Yorker* have placed him among the ranks of the respected literati. And this month, Martin stars with Eddie Murphy in *Bowfinger* (Universal), a sharp satire based on Martin's eighth screenplay. It showcases the silver-haired star as a desperate filmmaker trying to dupe Hollywood's top moneymaker (Murphy) into starring in his flick.

At 54, Steve Martin may qualify as an old G in Tinseltown, but, as VIBE found out, he still has love for raw lyrics, bookish babes, and bad behavior.

In Bowfinger *you share the screen with two of Hollywood's bad boys, Eddie Murphy and Robert Downey Jr. Were you apprehensive?*

No, in fact, they're my role models. I *wish* I could be a Hollywood bad boy.

What's Steve Martin's version of bad behavior?

I'd probably have a dessert.

So you never considered yourself a bad boy even though you became famous billing yourself as 'one wild-and-crazy guy'?

You go through different periods. Earlier on, it was comfortable for me to be crazy and big. Then you get a little older and get a little more in-depth and you want to play more serious roles.

In your old stand-up act you'd often play the banjo. And you opened a few concerts for the Blues Brothers. How would you describe your musical tastes?

I have a very esoteric taste. I listen to music outside the mainstream.

Like what? Underground rap?

No. I like Irish, classical, and bluegrass music. And I love Alanis Morissette. There's something so honest and raw about her lyrics. They're deep and filled with pain. When I grew up, songs were very happy and light. The new music is dark. It's fantastic.

But you do have some appreciation for rap. I remember your song "King Tut" (Warner Bros., 1978), based on the story of the Egyptian pharaoh Tutankhamen. Can you bust a rhyme for me?

Okay, but it was more like talking than rapping. It went something like this... *"When he was a young boy / He never thought he'd see / People stand in line / To see the boy kiiing / King Tut / How'd you get so funky?"*

*[*Laughs*] Are you aware that you have another connection to hip hop? Back in 1988, the rap group EPMD dropped a song called "Steve Martin" (Priority).*

I haven't heard of the group, but I think I heard about the song.

Rosa Parks recently filed a lawsuit against the rap group OutKast for naming a song after her. Apparently not everyone feels honored to be given props in hip hop.

Sometimes older people don't always connect to the younger generation and understand that what they're doing is not offensive.

Next time you're in N.Y.C. on a Sunday I'm going to take you to this nightclub called the Tunnel, so you can hear the hottest hip hop joints.

The Tunnel? I don't go out to discos, but I'll have to keep that in mind.

C'mon Marty Mar, I can see you now, out on the dance floor with all the honeys.

I'm ashamed to say it, but I'm not much of a dancer.

And I once read that you don't even go after beautiful women. Are you still shunning the babes?

I find myself attracted to interesting, quirky-looking women. I like the bookish, librarian type.

But those are the women you have to keep your eye on. The quiet ones usually flip the script and turn out to be the wildest.

I'm surprised every time I meet a woman. I don't think the sexes really understand each other. You can work and get better at it, but you *never* master it.

Speaking of honeys, in your movie All of Me *(Universal, 1984), with Lily Tomlin, you two shared one body. If you had to choose between Janet Jackson or Oprah Winfrey, who would share your temple?*

There's a line I used in *L.A. Story* (TriStar, 1991): "I could never be a woman because I'd stay home all day and play with my breasts." That said, I'd have to go with Janet.

ANDREW ECCLES/OUTLINE

HOLLYWOOD HOW-TO

So you want to be in pictures? Tips from a box-office babe.

Navigating Tinseltown's celluloid labyrinth can be a bitch, or the ultimate dream—as it was for Hadley Davis, author of the raucously witty rule book *Development Girl: The Hollywood Virgin's Guide to Making It in the Movie Business* (Doubleday). A former Warner Brothers script reader turned movie producer, Davis currently has several hush-hush big-screen projects pipelining through Fox, MTV, and HBO Films—A-list celebs *attached.* (One project, tentatively titled "I Saw You," is about shy singles who hook up through the personals.) VIBE caught up with the 27-year-old movie maven at Newsroom, L.A.'s latest to-be-seen-in eatery where showbiz slaves lunch among power babes and movie moguls, and asked for the low-down on how to be a Hollywood player.

Janice Roshalle Littlejohn

We've heard the movie biz is run by Ivy League grads who hire their blueblood pals. Tell us: How can a brilliant hard-knocks kid like Jay-Z get an unpedigreed foot in Hollywood's door?

There are a lot of people who are not college-educated at the top of the game. The best way in is to be an intern. You're not going to be paid. So you have to want it really badly.

In Development Girl, *you imply that what you know is important but what people* think *you know is crucial. What are three lies a showbiz virgin may need to tell?*

First thing: "Yes, sure I have an agent. CAA (Creative Artists Agency) is representing me." Next: "My favorite filmmaker is Michelangelo Antonioni. I dig *Blowup.*" In a meeting at Miramax they could say, "I love *Life Is Beautiful.* I only go to films with subtitles."

You also stress the importance of using an inside connection—no matter how distant—to get a meeting with an industry bigwig. Can you show us the six degrees that connect Interscope "It" girl Mya to one of Hollywood's Big Boys?

[*After much thought*] Okay. Mya was on the soundtrack for *Bulworth,* which starred Halle Berry, who starred in *The Rich Man's Wife,* which was produced by Hollywood Pictures, a subsidiary of Disney, where, at the time, Jeffrey Katzenberg used to be the No. 2 guy until he formed the partnership with David Geffen and Steven Spielberg to create DreamWorks.

Damn! Now explain this: Once a woman, say Foxy Brown, breaks into "the industry," why does she need to be more careful about who she dates than, say, Method Man or Eminem?

You have more power with the guy that wants to see you naked than someone who [already] has and has nothing more to gain. It's not about sleeping your way to the top, it's about *playing* your way to the top.

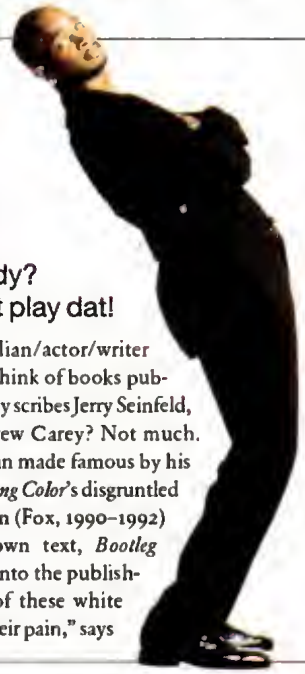


Breaking down Hollywood's door

JAY BEVENOUR

JOKES OF A CLOWN

White comedy? Homey don't play dat!



What does comedian/actor/writer Damon Wayans think of books published by funny-boy scribes Jerry Seinfeld, Jay Leno, and Drew Carey? Not much. That's why the man made famous by his portrayal of *In Living Color*'s disgruntled Homey the Clown (Fox, 1990–1992) has tossed his own text, *Bootleg* (HarperCollins), into the publishing ring. "Most of these white boys, I don't get their pain," says the 38-year-old married father of four. "I've picked up [their] books and either they're just jokes, or it's so painful it's not funny."

Wayans's ode to humor, *Bootleg* (which is also the name of his still-in-the-planning-stages comedy album and tour), is a schizophrenic collection of outtakes from the joker's comedy routines. Its "chapters" range from the unbelievably wack "Po' Me" and "Black Reporters Got It Hard" to the wickedly funny "Father v. Son" and "The Out Clause." *Bootleg*'s best bit, "One Night Stand," is too long to quote here. But we won't leave you hanging. Here's one sick snippet:

Wayans on Little Richard's hypothetical AIDS announcement (We said "hypothetical," y'all, so don't trip): At his press conference [Little Richard] would've said, "Guess what? I'm HIV-positive! Hee Hee Hee! Shut up! I started AIDS. It wasn't no green monkey. The monkey stole it from me. I had it first. I was HIV-positive when Rock Hudson was just a pebble. Shut up!"

Rochell Thomas

JAZZ SET STILL

Jazz enthusiast Carol Friedman is no slouch behind the camera. Light and shadow are her trumpet and mute, and in *The Jazz Pictures* (Tondo Books), the photographer wails and moans, showcasing a medley of rare portraits of jazz greats laughing, lounging, and expressing themselves without their instruments. Songstress Etta Jones haunts us from behind a smoky shroud. Elusive saxophonist Omette Coleman strolls down a snow-covered New York City street, while Sun Ra's eye-catching glares dare you to question his musical genius, internal conflict, and strength. The ultimate coffee-table tome, *Jazz Pictures* is stellar work by Friedman—glowing proof that as a jazz photographer, this lady can blow.

Jeff Gamble



Pianist Cecil Taylor's stare

DAMON WAYANS: MICHAEL LAVINE/FOX; CECIL TAYLOR: CAROL FRIEDMAN



DOO-WOP BOOK DROP

Less than one week after Lauryn Hill snagged five trophies at the 41st Annual Grammy Awards, *Lauryn Hill: She's Got That Thing*—a 216-page unauthorized biography about the Fugee mama—hit bookstore shelves. How'd the publisher do dat dere? Here's how:

AUGUST 20, 1998:
The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill (Ruffhouse/Columbia) drops, selling more than 420,000 copies its first week.

SEPTEMBER 1998:
Listening to *Miseducation* "nonstop," St. Martin's editor Kristen Macnamara assigns the biography to pop-bio writer Chris Nickson.

JANUARY 1999:
Hill is nominated for 10 Grammys. Macnamara asks Nickson to "rush."

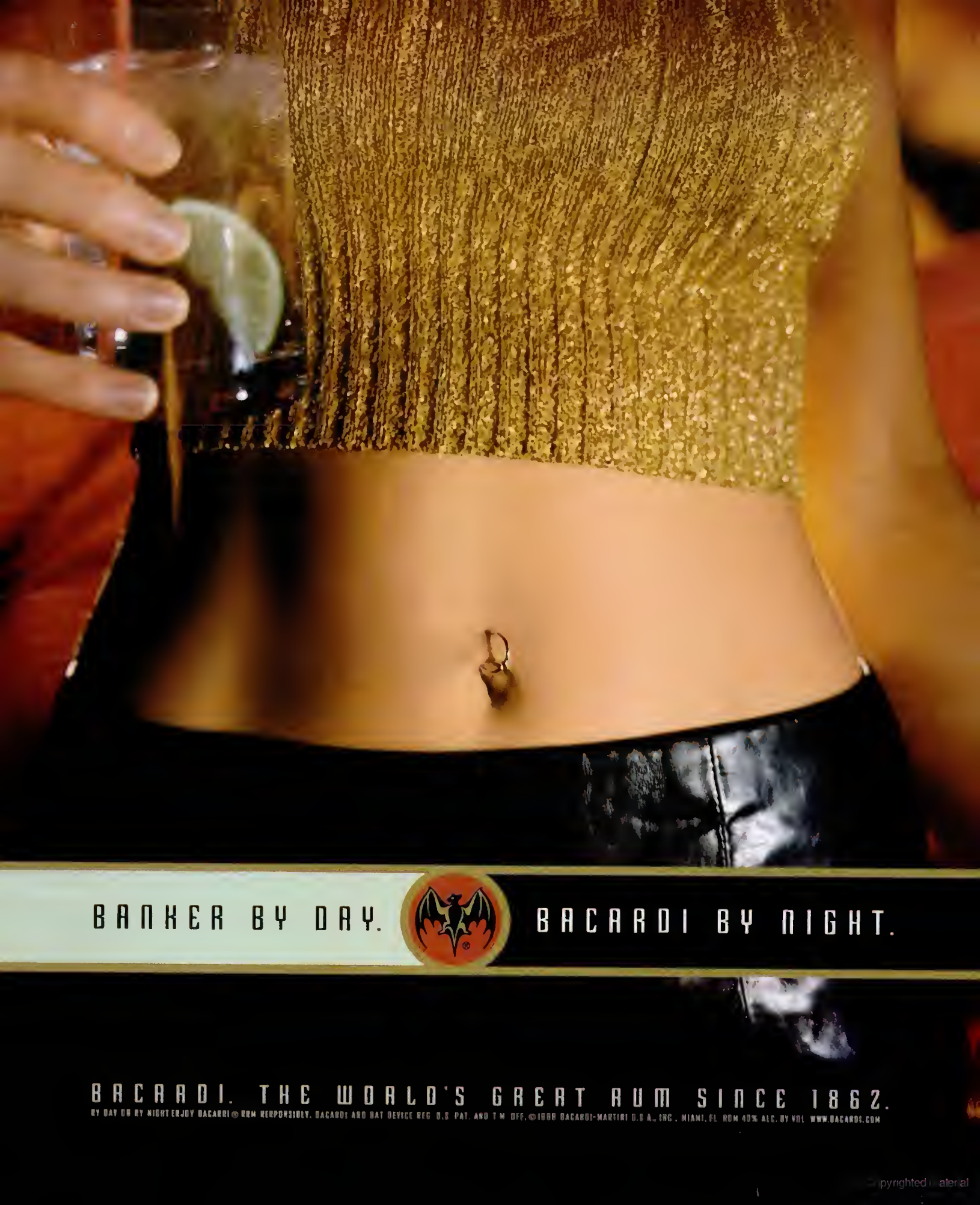
FEBRUARY 1999:
Nickson submits a 154-page manuscript.

FEBRUARY 15, 1999:
The bio is revised, edited, and printed in only 10 days (it usually takes at least a month). St. Martin's quietly ships 25,000 copies of *That Thing* to bookstores nationwide.

FEBRUARY 24, 1999:
Hill dominates Grammy night, winning five awards.

MARCH 2, 1999:
That Thing goes on sale, making Border's Top Ten list and prompting St. Martin's to print and ship 50,000 more copies.

Abby Addis



pyrighted material

BEATS, RHYMES, AND VIDEO GAMES

Rap continues its home invasion—hip hop sounds for players' stations


Cypress Hill join the Family

KLAUS SCHONWIESE/OUTLINE


Kingpin is not for kids

Step into the suburban Atlanta pleasure palace Jermaine Dupri calls home, and you know you're in the presence of a stone-cold video-game junkie. "That's all I do," says the cornrowed rapper/producer/CEO of So So Def records. "I got the big arcade games at my house. I got every kind of PlayStation, Nintendo—all that shit—right in front of my TV." Did he say TV? It's more like a theater-size projection screen. JD's a player who knows the games.

"When you pull up the menu screens and all that," he says, "usually all you hear is that little-bitty cheesy music." He pauses to imitate the sound: "*Tink tink tink.*" Not exactly what you want to hear booming out of your state-of-the-art entertainment system. So Dupri took matters into his own hands with *Madden NFL 2000* (Electronic Arts), the latest edition of the top-selling football simulation. "All the music on there is gonna be JD beats, and I did a rap in the beginning," he says. "It's gonna be real hot."

Video-game advocates claim that their industry now dwarfs the music business and even out-earned Hollywood last year, but Dupri clearly got involved out of love. "I been playing *Madden* since '92," he says, "but this one is crazy. Jamal Anderson from the Falcons—when he scores he does the dirty bird. And Keyshawn [Johnson of the New York Jets], he does the Bankhead bounce in the end zone!"

The relationship between JD and Electronic Arts started with Dupri getting free games, then Electronic Arts sponsored So So Def's promotional van. Now there's the *Madden NFL 2000* gig, and JD will take on a consultant role on future titles. "Everybody in the rap game plays *John Madden*," he says, "so they gonna hear this and be like, 'Damn, they shoulda used us.' We gotta always cross-promote, y'know? This could be like a stepping stone."

Indeed, if folks have been sleeping on the power of the video-game market, they are starting to wake up. "We've got more frequency of rotation than any top radio station," says EA's Randy Eckhardt, who commissioned original tracks from Mix Master Mike (along with Metallica, Primus, and many more) for a pulse-pounding racing game called *Hot Wheels*.


Madden NFL 2000: Don't drop the rock


Madden ain't a thang: Jermaine Dupri drops beats and rhymes for hip hop's favorite video game

MANUEL HUTH

And there's more to come. Wu-Tang Clan has partnered with Activision to develop a fighting game with original music called *Wu-Tang: Shaolin Style*. Cypress Hill will be supplying beats and character voices for a thugged-out PC title called *Kingpin* (Interplay Entertainment). "You work your way up to the fucking head of the Mafia," explains DJ Muggs. "It's the whole Gambino thing as a game." But Muggs may have to wait a while to play *Kingpin*. The producer recently packed up his video games and put them in a closet. "I started waking up every morning and playing games," he says. "I had to stop fuckin' around. Them shits is like crack."

Rob Kenner

HOLLA AT ME! Keepin' up with keepin' in touch

Motorola Digital StarTAC ST7760, $350; Clip-On Organizer, $249

Everyone's wearing cargo pants, but weighing down all those pockets is a drag when you have to lug around a cell phone, a notepad, a daily planner, a phone book, and more. Lose some of that dead weight with the new Motorola StarTAC Clip-On Organizer. This sleek mini–Personal Digital Assistant snaps perfectly onto the new digital StarTAC ST7760 cell phone as well as any older analog StarTAC. Compatible with your PC, Web calendar, and Palm III, the Clip-On Organizer holds hundreds of names, addresses, and appointments and even lets you dial numbers with one touch of its LCD screen. So while your friends sweat under the weight of their waist packs, you'll be feeling fancy free.

Mark Brooks







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REVOLUTIONS



K-CI & JOJO
'IT'S REAL'
MCA

BY ANN POWERS

Slow down, all you love-man enthusiasts and seekers of the smooth. Before we get into the latest affair from the brothers Hailey, let's take a minute to talk about *realness*. Everyone from President Clinton to your favorite drag queen would agree that this elusive essence does not always come easily, even to its masters. Realness is achieved by shading and shaping a viewpoint until it becomes the truth, not letting small matters like actual facts get in the way. It can be dangerous to pursue realness in politics or personal relationships, but in soul music the quest is essential, since soul artists must convince us that their songs can express our most

JESSE FROHMAN/OUTLINE

unspeakably private passions. Soul's realness is more fervent than nearly any other kind, and more precarious. A wrong step can make the suavest player seem like a lying fool.

The facts motivating K-Ci & JoJo right now are clear. As one half of the multiplatinum early-'90s quartet Jodeci, the Haileys came up with a patented recipe for heat that made them stars. But the by-product was an image that wouldn't age well. These R&B freaks didn't want to follow Rick James into dubious maturity—the Luther Vandross route seemed like a safer bet. So they made 1997's *Love Always* (MCA), an album dripping with sentiment and Babyface-style orchestration. The new stance sold millions. Now K-Ci & JoJo have to prove it can last. Thus, the blatantly titled *It's Real*.

So is it? Yes, mostly, in the ways that matter. The album's 12 tales of love, sex, betrayal, and so on don't offer any shocking insights or sharp musical innovations, but that's deliberate. K-Ci & JoJo are traditionalists who will only get more rootsy with time. Sharing half the production and writing credits with a posse of dependable groove doctors (including Daryl Pearson, Emanuel Officer, and their old pal Babyface), the Haileys apply their talents to making music that sounds like it will endure.

RAGE AND ANGUISH ARE EXCELLENT ROUTES TO REALNESS BECAUSE THEIR IMPACT IS SO STRONG. BUT K-CI & JOJO KNOW THAT THEIR FANS NEED A SPOONFUL OF HONEY AND A SPRINKLE OF SPICE.

In fact, the most compelling tracks on *It's Real* invoke a past that many hip hop heads might have to chase down in their parents' record collections. K-Ci & JoJo are grounded in the urban blues of sophisticates like Bobby Bland and Robert Cray, with their funk beats slowed to a crawl and their hummable choruses flecked with menace. "Fee Fie Fo Fum," with its sense of stalking jealousy and a bass line like blood pressure, is the most immediate. "Life," written by R. Kelly for the soundtrack for the same-named Eddie Murphy–Martin Lawrence flick, is the grandest. But the Pearson-produced "What Am I Gonna Do?" achieves the most satisfying balance.

Like most of the album's best moments, this song is ignited by K-Ci's gruff emotions as he enriches and complicates his shouter's style. His hot-tempered righteousness is well suited to this lament of a two-timed two-timer. But the story turns when JoJo takes over. He uses all his sweetness to express the cynicism of a lover who finds that the woman he always wanted to trust really does deserve his scorn. As the song's unsettled rhythms mount, a sinking chorus signals the end of a love dream that never had a chance.

Rage and anguish are excellent routes to realness because their impact is so strong. But K-Ci & JoJo know that their fans need a spoonful of honey and a sprinkle of spice to make their medicine go down easy. So *It's Real* contains the requisite silly love songs and dance-floor grinders. Come-ons still serve the Haileys well, particularly on the energetically lewd "I Wanna Get to Know You," which includes an ingenious interpolation of the Tom Tom Club's oft-sampled 1980 hit, "Genius of Love." Obviously, sexiness is not something K-Ci & JoJo have to work too hard at. The day when these guys can't nail a line like, "Give me all your numbers, girl, so I can reach out and touch you," will signal the end of a thick chapter in the history of seduction.

Their bravado never fades, but K-Ci & JoJo still struggle with more delicate emotions. The lowest points on *It's Real* are artificially sweetened by florid, synthesized strings and cloying melodies. The absolute worst is "Hello Darlin," an ode to an earth angel that recalls Lionel Richie at his toothache-producing nadir. As they settle into adulthood, these heartthrobs find more intrigue in life's difficulties than in its bliss. Even the perky pop anthem "Mama's Song" expresses hope only as an antidote to anxiety. But K-Ci & JoJo need to keep on with the corny stuff too, and not just because it sells records. When they figure out how to express contentment as well as they declare their worries and needs, the Haileys will fully satisfy their urge to be *real*.

REVOLUTIONS IN SOUL

OH, WORD?

BY MINYA OH

(All information subject to change at the artist's slightest whim.)

Power in numbers is rap's new credo, as hip hop's brightest solo stars assemble their own artistic rosters. From DMX's Ruff Ryders to Fat Joe's Terror Squad and Jay-Z's Roc-A-Fella camp, the more the merrier. But what crew can command the kind of sheer talent seen on *Violator the Album*, due this summer on Violator/Def Jam?



COURTESY OF VIOLATOR

Steering Violator's artist-management company and record label is Chris Lighty, along with Violator artist-management president and co-owner Mona Scott. And while Lighty and Scott don't grace video screens or headline concert tours, their behind-the-scenes cachet is reflected on a lineup that includes Q-Tip's electric solo debut, "Vivrant Thing," and L.L. Cool J's Swizz Beats–produced, raw resurrection "Know Why?!?" Both tracks revive an aggressive energy that we've desperately been missing from Tip and L.L. There are also hot contributions from Missy Elliott, Cormega, Busta Rhymes, Fat Joe, Big Pun, and Eightball, to name a few. But the incredible, powerhouse posse cut, "The Violators," featuring everyone from Mobb Deep, Cam'ron, and Busta to newcomers Sonya Blade, the Franchise, and Mysonne, exemplifies Lighty's motive: "We're sending a message to everyone in the game," he says. "And this is only the beginning."

In that hip hop hurricane known as Bad Boy Entertainment, one man has been an anchor in the eye of the storm. Quietly but surely, Carl "Chucky" Thompson has crafted his production skills to cover all sides of the hip hop and R&B arena. In the process, he's reaped gold and platinum plaques for such hits as Faith Evans's 1995 "You Used to Love Me" and Notorious B.I.G.'s 1994 "Big Poppa (Remix)." But how has Thompson achieved success without falling victim to any big willie-style pitfalls? Maybe it's his solid musical foundation—Thompson is a self-taught instrumentalist who played drums with legendary go-go bandleader Chuck Brown before he was a teenager. Or perhaps it's his strong family foundation. He's a devoted husband and father of four who's maintained a home studio in Washington, D.C., away from the industry rat race. Whatever it is, Thompson's future is only getting brighter. Even within Sean "Puffy" Combs's star-studded Hitmen production team, Thompson's known as the "Cleaner," who takes underachieving tracks and polishes them into pop gems like Total's 1995 "Can't You See." Thompson has now reunited with the late great Notorious B.I.G. to lay new beats under unreleased lyrics on the tentatively titled "Dead Wrong" and "Can I Get With You?" for possible inclusion on Biggie's posthumous album. He also locks down most of Mary J. Blige's new album, including the showstopping women's anthem "P.M.S." Then there are the collaborations with Ice Cube (for his *Peace* album), Nonchalant, Carl Thomas, *plus* an electronic boogie bounce for Puff. But there's no doubt that Thompson's faith and passion for music will carry him above and beyond the call of duty.



COURTESY OF CHUCKY THOMPSON

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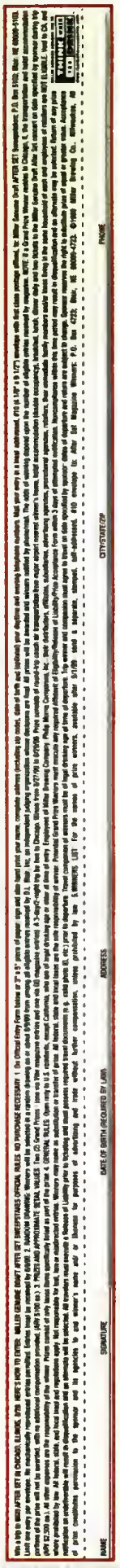
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MGD MUSIC



REVOLUTIONS 2 MOTLOVER

EL RITMO

BY CRISTINA VERÁN

MANNA:
(Middle English, from Latin/Greek/Hebrew)
1. Divinely supplied spiritual nourishment
2. A usually sudden and unexpected source of gratification or pleasure
MANA:
(of Polynesian origin; akin to Hawaiian and Maori *mana*)
1. The power of the elemental forces of nature embodied in an object or person
2. Moral authority; prestige

The word **Maná**, like the music of this super*grupo*, translates easily into many languages. Long popular among Latinos, Mexico's vanguard border-crossers of the rock *en español* movement are now amazingly popular among a growing number of gringos left dehydrated by the drying rock riverbeds of the U.S.

The band recently taped a live special in Miami for *MTV Latin America Unplugged*, which was released on CD, DVD, and video in June. They performed 10 Maná hits as well as three songs by Latin heavyweights Rubén Blades, José Alfredo Jimenez, and Juan Gabriel. While the intimate acoustic setting may have seemed strange to musicians who are accustomed to performing in sold-out stadiums, it provided fans a rare opportunity to savor the group's brand of rock *eclectico*—complete with top-notch guest percussionists and horn players—up close and personal.

Maná was founded 13 years ago in the conservatively Catholic Guadalajara, Mexico by ex-members of an earlier incarnation called Sombrero Verde. "Fher [Fernando Olvera, the lead singer] wanted to do a lot more risky, fusion types of music," recalls the group's drummer and coproducer, Alex González, a Cuban-Colombian from Miami and the only non-Mexican member (the others are guitarist Sergio Vallín and bass player Juan Calleros). The group decided they would record in their native Spanish although until the mid-to-late '80s many Mexican rock bands sang in English, which very few of their listeners could understand. "We wanted our *own* people," says Fher, "to understand what we were saying."

From the beginning, Maná mellifluously melded rock, punk, salsa, and reggae to develop their signature sound. Their stylish open-mindedness has helped them sell millions of albums—their most recent one, *Sueños Liquidos* (WEA/Latina), exceeded 700,000 sales in the U.S. alone—and has earned them the 1999 Grammy for Best Latin Rock/Alternative Performance. However, they've also garnered criticism from some purists. "A lot of the hardcore rockers say, 'But that's not rock 'n' roll' because we're putting in some Latin music or reggae or bolero," explains González, unfazed. Still, the fans' resounding support is steadfast.

Beyond the attention, adulation, and adrenaline rush that stardom has reaped for Maná, the biggest payoff for them is a public platform where they can address a myriad of social issues. "Our fame has meant that the people will listen to what we say and believe in it too," says Fher. He and the rest of the band put money to mouth in 1995, forming a charitable foundation called Selva Negra (Black Jungle), which is also a song title from their 1995 WEA/Latina album, *Cuando los Angeles Lloran* (*When the Angels Cry*). **Their most publicly praised project to date has been the establishment of two nature sanctuaries protecting endangered sea turtles in Mexico. "There is a false belief that eating turtle eggs gives a man greater sexual potency," Fher says. "That's just *not* true!"**

While such nature projects have garnered support from ecological agencies across the Americas, the group's positions on other issues have creared controversy. Because Maná promote the use of condoms as AIDS prevention, several concerts in their hometown were canceled. "But, that experience," says Olvera, "probably solidified our position even more and made us *more* radical-thinking in many regards." They're planning on building a school and a hospital in Mexico's war-torn Chiapas region.



COURTESY OF WARNER MUSIC LATIN AMERICA

Maná's songs, written primarily by Olvera and Gonzalez (Vallín contributed one song on their last album), put politics to pentameter. Songs like "¿Donde Jugarán los Niños (Where Will the Children Play)?" from the album of the same name speak volumes: "*La tierra esta a punto de partirse en dos / El cielo ya se ha roto, ya se ha roto el llanto gris / La mar vomita rios de aceite sin cesar / Y hoy me pregunte despues de tanta destrucción* (The earth is about to split itself in two / The sky has been broken, destroyed by the gray weeping / The sea vomits rivers of oil without end / And today I question myself after so much destruction)."

But the band is equally as passionate about *amor*. On "Rayando el Sol (The Sun Is Rising)," one of Maná's biggest crowd-pleasers (featured on the *MTV Unplugged* soundtrack), the band wear their hearts on their sleeves: "*Es mas facil llegar al sol que a tu corazón* (It's easier to reach the sun than your heart)." The song may sound semantically simple, but it's actually profoundly deep, thanks in (no small) part to Fher's sharp, powerful voice, which lends itself effortlessly to the song's emotion.

While continued crossover success—and perhaps a subsequent English song or two—seems inevitable, don't expect these proud *rockeros* to abandon their roots. "Maná has become a very important symbol," says a pride-filled González, "and in a certain way, we're representing Latinos and the Latin culture to the world."

HEAVY ROTATION:

TOM ZÉ—*Postmodern Platos* (Luaka Bop/Warner Bros.)
DLG—*Gotchal* (Sony Discos)
LATIN HOUSE DANCE COMPILATION—*Hola Mi Gente* (H.O.L.A.)
SEPTETO HABANERO—*Orgullo de los Soneros* (Lusafrica/Circular Moves)
TITO NIEVES—*Clase Apárte* (RMM)

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INSPECTAH DECK
'UNCONTROLLED SUBSTANCE' LOUD

Surrounded by the Wu-Tang Clan's colorful crew of charismatic characters, it's completely understandable that Inspectah Deck's star was not the first to shine. Hidden among the disgruntled sex-symbol exploits of Method Man, the incandescent criminological tales of Raekwon the Chef and Ghostface Killah, and the real-life rawhide adventures of Ol' Dirty Bastard, the quiet not named Jason Hunter remains virtually unknown to the mainstream. But don't tell that to the denizens of hip hop's underground, a land where the Clan's most comprehensible MC is as revered as Paul Revere was by 18th-century revolutionary thugs (evidenced by the outcry of support for Deck's trilogy of 1998 guest vocal appearances). So now, after getting metaphysical with Guru (Gang Starr's "Above the Clouds," Noo Trybe), trading verses with his lyrically lavish label mates Big Pun and Prodigy (Pun's "Tres Leches," Loud), and adding ample assistance to Pete Rock's comeback ("Tru Master," Loud), Deck unleashes his long-delayed debut, *Uncontrolled Substance*.

Standing in defiance of the polished jigginess espoused by most of hip hop's current circus of stars, the Rebel INS keeps his music down to earth. Murky, gritty, and subtly innovative, *Uncontrolled Substance* draws strong production performances from RZA, 4th Disciple, Tru Master, and Deck himself. Epitomized by recurring interludes featuring furious freestyles over homemade, pause-tape-style beats, the album is a throwback to the days when young MCs busted rhymes at the school lunchroom table. Although his past two "solo" endeavors–the forgotten *Tales From the Hood* soundtrack foray "Let Me at Them" (MCA, 1995) and the lost-in-the-mix Wu-Tang Forever moment "The City" (Loud, 1997)–were underwhelming at best, Deck's latest comes with a cool cat's calm confidence. It's the most satisfyingly consistent Wu-Tang collection since Ghostface Killah's 1996 *Ironman* (Sony).

While some of his fellow Clansmen have relied on the Wu team of platinum superstars to make their offshoot platters potent, Deck avoids most of the big names, providing, instead, lesser-known Wu-Tangers the opportunity for some much-needed exposure. Continuing the tradition of Shao Lin posse exhibitions–Wu-Tang Clan's "Wu-Tang: 7th Chamber Part I" (Loud, 1993), Genius's "4th Chamber" (Geffen, 1995)–the aptly titled "9th Chamber" is a ferocious lyrical beatdown courtesy of special guests LA the Darkman, Street Life, and Killarmy's Killah Sin and Baretta 9. Over crashing, splashing drums and cymbals, Deck's voice is the last one heard as he announces his impending arrival: "Weak MCs, take me to your leader!" Throughout the album, Deck's vivid rhymes prove he has enough charisma, presence, and skill to captain his own rap ship.

Asserting the Wu's commercial dominance over the competition, the piano-tinged "Longevity" features the group's perennial overachiever U-God and a chorus that rings true as a blueprint for rap success: "Not many last in the game / Wu-Tang comin' through / Breakin' out the same way we came / This is not an act / This is actual fact / Nothing but experience placed upon the track." Deck draws inspiration from his real-life troubles as an oft-incarcerated youth, and his finest musical moments, not surprisingly, are tales of life in the urban jungle.

REVOLUTIONS REVOLUTIONS

"Children grow and women produce and men go work and some do stealing / Everyone's got to make a livin'." With the everlasting lyrics from the 20th Century Steel Band's breakbeat classic, "Heaven & Hell" (Island, 1976), serving as its backdrop, the nifty "Night Shift" is a gripping three-part story of underworld dramatics. There's Tie, a Bed-Stuy drug dealer who only comes out at night; Brown Sugar, a no-nonsense prostitute who'll "slice you twice before you feel the first;" and a police chief's car-thief son, Keith. Equally compelling, "Word on the Street" finds a frantic Inspectah ducking cops because his main man violated an old code-of-the-streets commandment that hip hop music holds especially dear: Thou shalt not snitch.

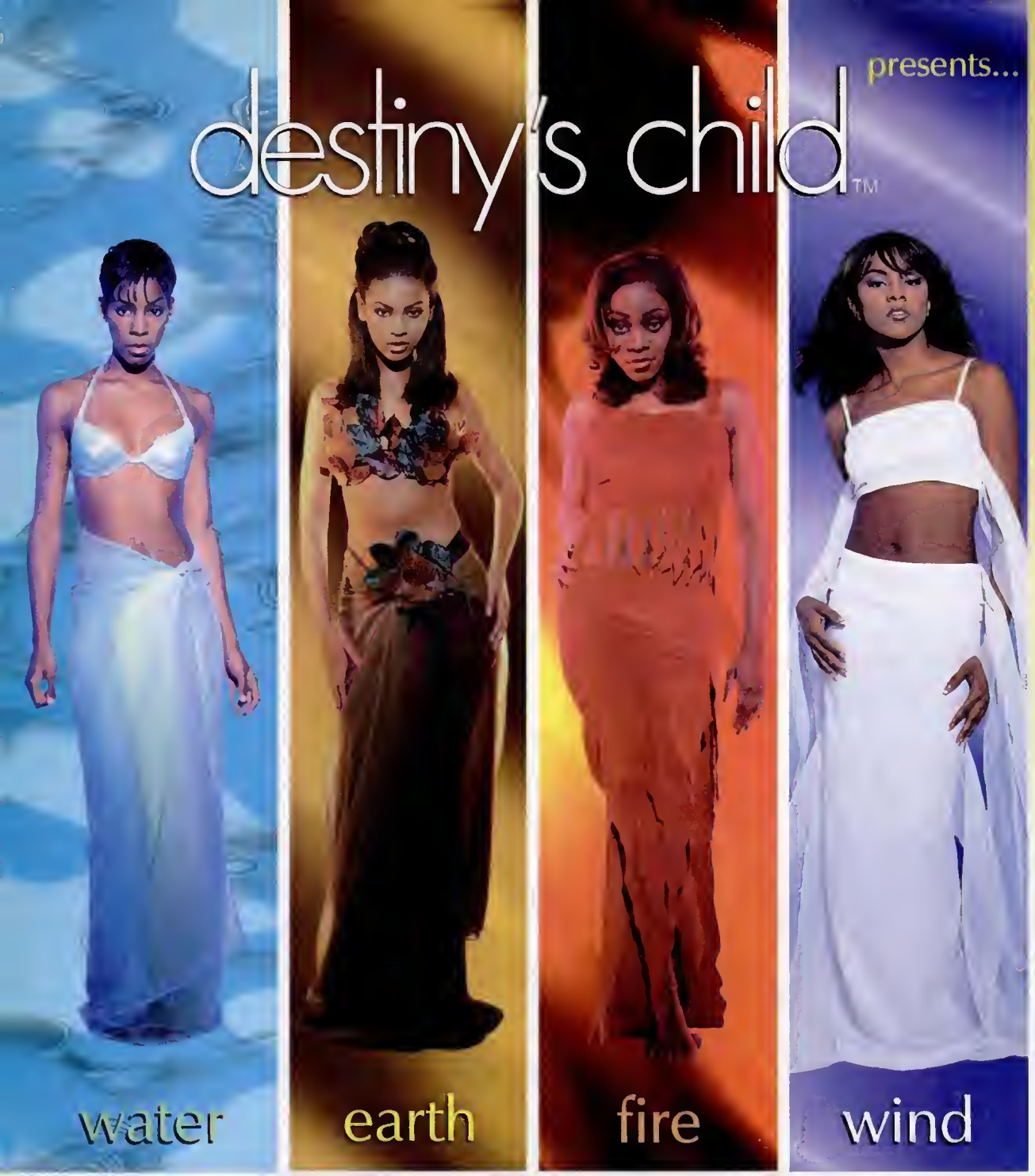
Unafraid to reveal his tender side, Deck struggles with the meaning of the "L" word on the Tru Master–produced "Loving You." Sandwiched between a tantalizing corkscrew guitar loop and LA the Darkman's second verse of seductive overtures, Deck begins by singing the praises of an ebony-eyed cutie he met on the subway. But by song's end, his attention has turned to a more dependable platonic female friend: "While your girls move like slippery eels / You the diamond in the rough that be keepin' it real."

DECK DRAWS INSPIRATION FROM HIS REAL-LIFE TROUBLES AS AN OFT-INCARCERATED YOUTH, AND HIS FINEST MUSICAL MOMENTS, NOT SURPRISINGLY, ARE TALES OF LIFE IN THE URBAN JUNGLE.

Uncontrolled Substance's missteps are few and far between. "The Settlement," though, is hard to get a handle on. A hokey, reggae-tinged hook and a female background vocalist that seems to be singing "Words won't help you" (Oh, word?) overwhelm Deck's clever lyrics. Recycling the bass line from Ghost's "Poisonous Darts," the drab, RZA-made "Friction" feels like a throwaway track.

Thankfully, though, Mr. Digital redeems himself on the production front by delivering the syncopated horn bursts and gurgling liquid samples of "Movers & Shakers." It's one of the Wu's most innovative arrangements ever and a very pleasant surprise on an album where simple, straightforward beats usually take a backseat to the captivating verbals.

Fuck Evil Knieval, Deck's the real daredevil. Throwing caution to the wind, the Rebel INS breaks the chains of today's hip hop convention. A true *solo* record, and one that strikes just the right balance between style and substance, *Uncontrolled Substance* succeeds on its own terms. For that, Deck deserves dap, a pat on the back, and–hopefully–a platinum plaque to add to his group's proud musical legacy. In case you don't know by now, it's Wu-Tang forever, muthafuckers. *Elliott Wilson*



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IN-STORES

AUGUST '99

GHET-O-VISION

AMBER 'AMBER' TOMMY BOY

Who'da thought the squeaky voice behind the 1996 crossover hit "This Is Your Night" would someday emerge as a credible pop artist? But that's precisely what this Scandinavian ingenue does on her startlingly potent, self-titled sophomore release. Once perceived as the disposable puppet of producers Christian and Frank Berman, Amber has spent the last four years developing solid songwriting chops and a sassy vocal style fondly reminiscent of "Vogue"-era Madonna. Although she delivers an ample dose of trend-conscious dance ditties (most notably the wicked first single, "Sexual"), Amber truly shines on more chilled jams like the hip hop–derived "Spiritual Virginity" and the plaintive piano ballad "I'm Free," revealing a lovely contralto range and impressively soulful phrasing. Perhaps most importantly, Amber moves through her material with unabashed pop glee. And at a time when most of pop radio's leading stars would rather be hardcore jeep dolls than mainstream song stylists, *Amber* washes over the senses like a cool, refreshing breeze.



TOSHI TASAKI

Larry Flick

OLU 'SOUL CATCHER' GEE STREET

Exuding the wisdom, style, and grace of a seasoned musician nearly twice his age, Harlem's Olu, 25, has created a soothing musical potion. His delectable debut, *Soul Catcher*—full of mellow vocals stretched out over hypnotic, mid-tempo beats—tells the story of self-discovery, spirituality, and ultimate love.

An ingenious blend of blues, jazz, R&B, and folk, the deeply personal *Soul Catcher* fuses a smooth, contemporary romanticism with a hip hop–influenced brand of social commentary. The heart-wrenching first single, "Baby Can't Leave It Alone," tackles drug addiction: "I know it seems there's no way out / But ask yourself a question before you score / Will I raise a child who's free from doubt / Or will I be resting forever more?" Two other prominent cuts are the fidelity-pledging lovefests "Together" and "My World," on which Olu stands strong under the weight of his commitments. "High Desert Woman," a Native-American-inspired tune about a buffalo woman, is thematically out of sync with the rest of the album but is equally compelling.

Comparisons to D'Angelo and Maxwell may be unavoidable, but ultimately Olu will emerge as the unique force he is.

Tomika Anderson



KATE CHAN

RAHZEL 'MAKE THE MUSIC 2000' MCA

On his captivating debut, *Make the Music 2000*, Rahzel perfects the art of noise (beat-boxing is an understatement) like no other. Best known as the Bobby McFerrin of the Roots, Rahzel steps out on his own to create an album full of singing violins, blaring horns, and impeccable hip hop beats—sounds all created with his mouth. *With his mouth.*

The intense "Steal My Soul," featuring Branford Marsalis and Me'Shell Ndegéocello, sensually connects hip hop and jazz. And trust, you'll find it extremely difficult to distinguish between Rahzel's voice and Marsalis's sax. While you're still dumbfounded, Q-Tip slides in for a fly quickie on the laid-back, Native Tongue–inspired "To the Beat." One of the best jams, "Southern Girl," features Erykah Badu and is a countrified ode to sisters from the dirty South. With its hard-knocking beat, "Southern Girl" will leave northern girls searching for *their* song. Slick Rick, Marley Marl, Aaron Hall, and of course the Roots all add their seasoned signatures to *Make the Music*, creating an eclectic mix that hopefully reflects what we have to look forward to in the new millennium. *Raqiyah Mays*



JONATHAN MANNION

REVOLUTIONS OF JOY

TRACIE SPENCER 'TRACIE' CAPITOL

Whoever said growing up was hard definitely knew the twists and turns of love. You know the drill: Girl meets boy, girl loses boy, girl cries over boy, girl repeats steps one through three. For twentysomething Tracie Spencer, it's the transition from inexperienced ingenue to liberated woman that makes her third album, *Tracie*, so penetratingly real.

A 12-year-old Spencer asserted her right to puppy love on her self-titled debut (Capitol, 1988). Then her 1990 sophomore effort, *Make the Difference* (Capitol), further proved Spencer's knack for romantic, bubble-gum ditties. Nowadays, she's dropping edgier vocals—and with the power of an old-school soul. Backed by an assured, bass-heavy beat, she gives the boot to a selfish lover on the first single, "It's All About You (Not About Me)." She attacks her own vocals with the grace of an acrobat on the sophisticated ballad "Not Gonna Cry" and on the Diane Warren–penned "Nothing Broken but My Heart." But more telling of her journey into adulthood are the intoxicating "If You Wanna Get Down" and "It's on Tonight," on which she sexes over melodies like only a grown woman can. If *Tracie* (produced by the legendary Soulshock & Karlin, with seven songs cowritten by the songbird) is any indication, Ms. Spencer's not only back in the game, but she's set to win. *Andrew Gillings*



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REVOLUTIONS SOUNDCLASH

BOOM SHOTS

BY ROB KENNER

"It's all about the Street Sweeper," said the grim-faced lad at the Brooklyn 45 shop. He wasn't referring to a rapid-fire 12-gauge killing machine, but to a revolutionary new dancehall riddim constructed–or deconstructed–by Wycliffe "Steely" Johnson and Cleveland "Clevie" Browne. The great bass and drum duo are known for leading the way into reggae's computerized era with definitive tunes like Super Cat's 1989 "Sweets for My Sweet" (VP), Tiger's 1991 "When" (VP), and Shabba Ranks's 1992 "Ting-A-Ling" (Epic).

Steely & Clevie's latest creation is packed with artist upon artist. Whether they're veterans (Little John, Burro Banton), headliners (Buju, Beenie, Spragga), or hot newcomers (Sean Paul, Zebra), everybody wants to put their business in the Street. There are two albums' worth of collected singles, *Street Sweeper* and *Street Sweeper 2* (VP), with your inevitable copycat versions in the works.



What began as an economic necessity has become a stylistic hallmark that is–for better *and* for worse–unique to reggae. While great hip hop breakbeats are often reused, dancehall fans have come to expect overkill on most every tune. Imagine Nas, Foxy, Method Man, DMX, Mobb Deep, and Jay-Z all dropping records with the same beat–at the same time–on a regular basis. It's cool when it works, but it can get monotonous when the crucial quality-quantity balance tilts the wrong way.

But a great riddim takes over by storm, pushing hot air and icy adrenaline, bursting laser-guided death rays, and stopping time in its tracks as it rattles your bones. The Street Sweeper is such a riddim. Its wickedness resides in a union of the old-school one-drop sound-system mix-down and the outermost limits of cutting-edge post-digital rhythmic structures. **The riddim goes all the way out there, tapping primal urges as it chops down big chunks of sound until not much remains but a delicate frame of disembodied drum hits.**

As the name suggests, the Street Sweeper hails straight from the cracked pavement of Kingston city. "The whole idea came from Steely," says mild-mannered Clevie. "He was sitting there on a street corner, rocking a stone with his feet, and it gave him a groove. I was down at the studio, and he rushed in saying, 'Hey, Clevie! I have the wickedest riddim in the world.' Then I had to translate the stone into drums."

"Some man 'fraid to go on an adventure," says Steely. "But Clevie is the man who I can tell anything and he bring it out." Or as Elephant Man put it (while taking a break from voicing Steely & Clevie's next big riddim, the Bitter Blood): "Anybody who miss the Street Sweeper miss sup'm in dem life. You see as a little boy you waan go to Coney Island and Disneyland? And when you go, you show off for your friends! Well now me can say me did catch the Street Sweeper. And 'Scare Dem' style done the place! You can't come tell me 'bout big tune."

HEAVY ROTATION:

BEENIE MAN—*The Doctor* (VP)
EVERTON BLENDER—*Rootsman Credentials* (Heartbeat)
BUSHMAN—*Total Commitment* (Greensleeves)
THE MEDITATIONS—*Ghetto Knowledge* (Easy Star)
GARGAMEL MUSIC PRODUCTIONS—*Riddim Sensation* (Penthouse)

SWAY & KING TECH 'THIS OR THAT' INTERSCOPE


STORM PAUL

Sway, King Tech, DJ Revolution (from left)

On their debut, *This or That*, Sway & King Tech warn listeners that they're about to hear "world premiers," "dope MCs," "incredible DJs" and "phat classics." Nothing could be closer to the truth. Sway & King Tech, popular hosts of the San Francisco Bay Area's *Wake Up Show* on KMEL-FM, deliver the *ultimate* mix tape.

Slamming exclusives like "The Anthem"—featuring RZA, Tech N9NE, Eminem, Xzibit, Pharoahe Monch, Kool G Rap, Jayo Felony, Chino XL, and KRS-One—work because neither MC outdoes the other, and each of them is at his absolute best. A booming remake of the Ultramagnetic MC's classic "Ego Trippin'" (1988) features Kool Keith and the Bay Area's Motion Man. Additionally, favorites like Main Source's 1990 "Looking at the Front Door" and EPMD's 1989 "So Wat Cha Sayin'" are just a few of the delicious classics sprinkled throughout. Mind-blowing freestyles from the likes of Redman and newcomer Sonya Blade alone make *This or That* worthwhile. And DJ Revolution brings everything together with his untouchable turntable skills.

But please don't waste your time listening to this album if you have any of the following conditions: shiny-suit syndrome, lame-hooks disease, or acute playa-hating disorder. Sway & King Tech made *This or That* strictly for hip hop purists who don't have time for anything substandard. *Davey D*

VARIOUS ARTISTS 'SOUNDTRACK FOR THE MOVIE *WILD WILD WEST*' INTERSCOPE

REVOLUTIONS OF THE YEAR

Back in the day, folks bought K-Tel compilations packed with their favorite hits. Now people buy soundtracks with brand-new songs by their favorite artists. But the soundtrack for the movie *Wild Wild West* (Warner Bros.) combines the pleasures of both types of compilations, since—like most contemporary R&B—many of its new tracks are based on hooks from the recent and not-so-recent past.

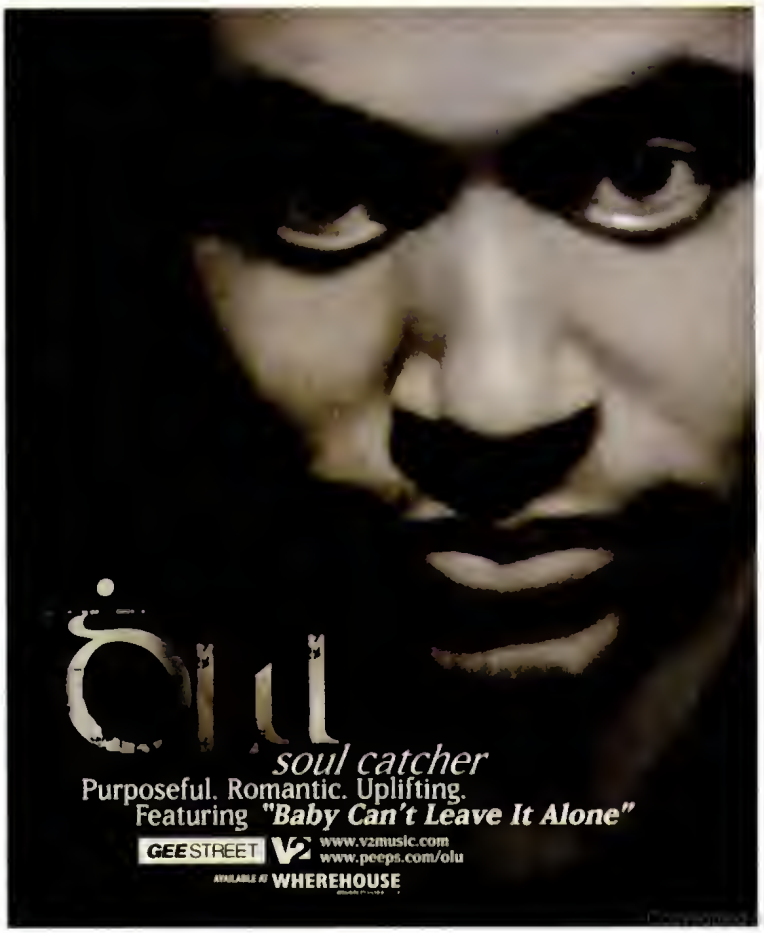
Faith Evans builds her forlorn "Mailman" from this year's "Heartbreak Hotel" (featuring Whitney Houston, Faith, and Kelly Price) vocal riff. And Tatyana Ali snatches a bit of Nice & Smooth's 1991 "Funky for You" for her cutesy "Getting Closer," featuring rap newcomer Kel Spencer. The album's other hip hop acts include Dr. Dre and Eminem, Slick Rick, Common, and Lil' Bow Wow, the potty-mouthed tyke from Snoop's 1996 *Doggfather* (Death Row). But the big willie behind these proceedings is the film's star, Will Smith, who contributes the exuberant title track, a winning combo of Stevie Wonder's 1963 "I Wish," the sliding bass from Digital Underground's 1990 "Humpty Dance," and vocals from Dru Hill's belting frontman, Sisqo.


BRUCE TALAMON

Big Willie

Though reviled by hip hop heads, Smith's radio-ready jams serve as hip hop initiations for legions of preteens who later will flock to buy releases by Jay-Z, DMX, and Nas. Hate Smith if you want, but you ain't hurting nothing but hip hop itself. *Craig Seymour*







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CHA CHA 'DEAR DIARY' NOONTIME/EPIC



JOHN RYLAND

On her gutsy, self-penned debut, Cha Cha, 18, counters the current image of hardcore female MCs—that of merely half-dressed eye candy spewing lyrics written by male producers. Deric "D-Dot" Angelettie, Irv Gotti, and Kevin "Shekspere" Briggs provide brain-scrambling beats and firm production, but it's Cha Cha's empowered, bourgeois-ghetto-girl performance that takes center stage.

Dear Diary moves easily from rapid-fire, bust-a-gat bravado ("Wheredapaperat," featuring Ja Rule and Memphis Bleek) to sassy sensuality over mid-tempo grooves ("He Likes," featuring Jagged Edge). The robbery-in-progress ditty, "Set It Off," with its faux phone convo and whispery vocals, is thisclose to sounding trite, but Cha Cha's throaty resonance and crystal-clear delivery distinguish her from other criminal-minded lyricists. Comparisons to Foxy Brown and Lil' Kim are inevitable, especially considering the album's opener, "M.O.M.M.Y.," a tag-team effort with Nas, on which Cha Cha yells, "You gotta have money if you dealing with me / You ain't never met a broad that's expensive as me." The rap community might be broke after dealing with so many costly broads, but Cha Cha's lyrical deftness is definitely worth the price.

Aliya S. King

REVOLUTIONS REVOLUTIONS

DONNA SUMMER 'VH1 PRESENTS DONNA SUMMER: LIVE & MORE—ENCORE!' EPIC



THOMAS LAU/OUTLINE

It can't be easy to be Donna Summer these days. No matter how hard she works to be a current, creatively vital artist, everyone seems to prefer her as a human jukebox of memory-inducing oldies. On *VH1 Presents Donna Summer: Live & More—Encore!*, the soundtrack to her recent VH1 concert special, the queen of the disco once again complies with public demand, rolling through her plush catalog of hits with a remarkably high degree of good humor and pride.

Unlike the many divas who save their best vocal tricks for the safe confines of a recording studio, Summer is doubly vibrant in a live setting. She adds a host of fresh twists to old faves like "Dim All the Lights" (which she reveals here was originally penned for Rod Stewart), "She Works Hard for the Money," and "I Feel Love." She truly has never sounded better.

Summer valiantly squeezes in three fine new tunes. There's "My Life," a tingly, "Last Dance"–esque anthem from her forthcoming stage musical, *Ordinary Girl*; "I Will Go With You," a grand English-language interpretation of a revered Andrea Bocelli/Sarah Brightman ballad replete with new lyrics and time-sensitive house beats; and "Love Is the Healer," on which Summer chants with earth-mama conviction over an insinuating tribal groove. Will the public chew on these tasty new morsels? Perhaps, but only after they've been served an umpteenth rendition of "Bad Girls."

Larry Flick

TRINA BROUSSARD
'INSIDE MY LOVE' SO SO DEF

Although Trina Broussard is signed to Jermaine Dupri's kid-friendly label, one listen to her low-key debut, *Inside My Love*, and it's clear: This is not your little brother's So So Def. A former background singer, Broussard is a sweet-voiced stylist whose breezy tunes clearly target an adult audience. Instead of talking about missing the bus, like Kris Kross, Broussard's missing her man on "Not Around." And instead of bragging 'bout how "Funkdafied" she is, like Da Brat, the songstress boasts that she can do it "All Night Long" on a sexy track featuring bedroom-bound horn blasts reminiscent of The Artist's "Adore."



M. JORDAN-SMITH

Inside My Love easily evokes a breadth of classic soul sounds. The title tune is a Minnie Riperton cover, which hip hop heads will recognize as the song that A Tribe Called Quest sampled on 1994's "Lyrics to Go." The organ-driven, Donny Hathaway–inspired "All I Need Is You" sounds as haunting as desire itself. And the background "hey, yeah"s and "oooh"s on several songs seem ripped right from the Emotions' throats. The only problem with the album's soulful-yet-skimpy nine cuts is that Broussard acts as if '70s soul was just about ballads and mid-tempo tunes. But even the Emotions had party-till-your-Afro-flops jams like 1977's "Best of My Love" and 1976's "I Don't Want to Lose Your Love." A couple of up-tempo numbers would have made Broussard's promising debut a little more def and less so-so. *Craig Seymour*

THE BETA BAND
'THE BETA BAND' ASTRALWERKS

Some rock bands keep on smelling that same ol' teen spirit. But others have begun exploring new media—playing with rhythms, textures, and sounds that were once verboten in such a guitar-centric tradition. Enter Scottish quartet the Beta Band and their first full-length album, a self-titled follow-up to last year's wonderfully paradoxical collection of early work, *The Three EPs*. Once again, the Betas defy all categorization, sampling liberally from folk, hip hop, the Motown sound, and psychedelia. (There's even a little Elvis-and-a-flügelhorn action.) The result's as chunky and sweet as a Toll House cookie, and as fully fleshed as a Gauguin nude.

REVOLUTIONS

The Beta's dynamic eclecticism suggests that abandoning a purist ethic may be the only future for pop music. And while that future surely will be based around collage-style production techniques pioneered by hip hop artists, it still comes fully equipped with the classical lyrical motifs. Here we have bitterness, unrequited love, existential pain, and suffering. Refreshingly MIA, however, is the whiny irony that saturates most modern rock. When guitarist/vocalist Stephen Mason sings (à la Bonnie Tyler), "Once upon a time I was falling apart / Now I'm always falling in love," over wave after wave of space-



ANDREW QUEST

station synthesizer on "The Hard One," it resounds with such earnest vulnerability, you can't help but feel a sympathetic twinge. Somewhere between your heart and the far side of the Hebrides. *Adrienne Day*

The Chemical Brothers | SURRENDER





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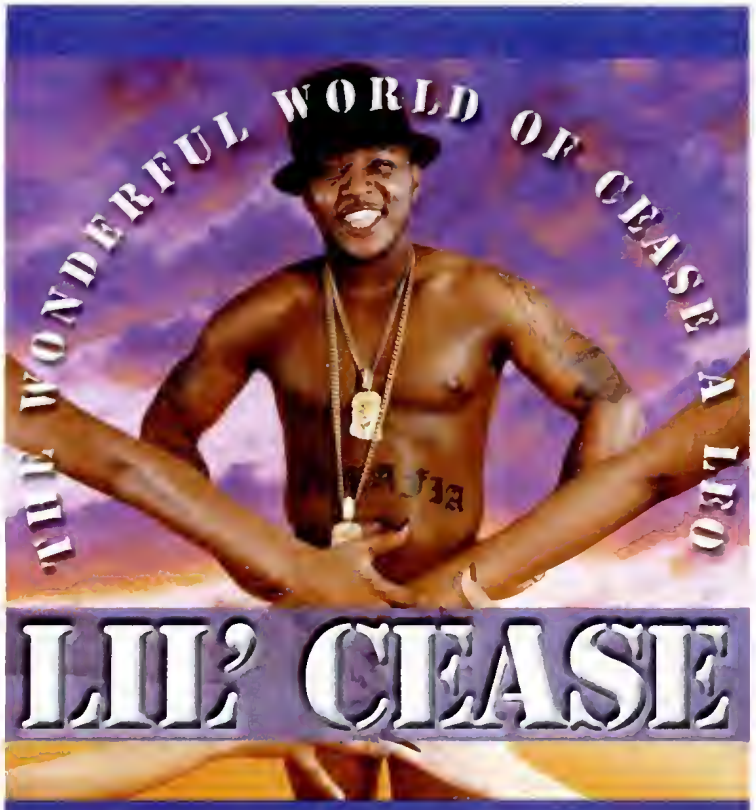
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REVOLUTIONS & EVOLUTIONS

CHAIRMAN'S CHOICE

BY CHAIRMAN MAD

You know we've hit a strange point in history when rappers begin declaring that their introduction to hip hop was neither a late-'70s Cold Crush tape nor the Sugarhill Gang's 1979 "Rapper's Delight" nor even Run-D.M.C.'s 1984 "Sucker MC's," but rather the Wu-Tang Clan's 1993 hit "C.R.E.A.M." Eighteen-year-old Washington, D.C., product **Millenium** freely admits that the Wu's paper-chase primer inspired him to pursue rap music seriously. Fortunately, the Chocolate City man-child has put this influence to good use. Witness Millenium's own elegantly gruff "Fantasia" (House of Abdul, 703-751-1313), the B side to his "How Far Will You Go" single. Celestial strings and the sampled voice of the forever-solid-gold Dionne Warwick crooning "This enchanted love of ours..." provide a provocative setting for a story line that traces young infatuation through betrayal and lost love to, ultimately, death. Life as a shorty shouldn't be so damn difficult.


Kooler than you: Keith

JAN L. ZEMAN

Kimani and Oracle of New York's **Masterminds** are no newcomers to the indie hip hop circuit. After meeting at Wesleyan University in 1994, these educated rappers dropped a series of well-received singles, highlighted by "I'm Talented..." (Mind Your Recordings, 1997), a chiming gem with a classic Special Ed hook. The duo's latest effort, *Live From Area 51* (Exodus, 212-831-6517), features another Special Ed homage (this time by way of Groove B Chill): the previously released "Hip Hop Music." But it's the team's likable new creations, such as the "New Rap Language"–esque, triple-time, tongue-twisting "The Rock" and the addictive, banjo(!)-plucking shuffle of "Onetwothree," featuring L-Fudge, that should inspire the uninitiated to get their minds right. These bad brains ain't no College Boyz.

Of course, when it comes to unfettered eclecticism in hip hop, there are few who can match the contributions of ex–Ultramagnetic MC **Kool Keith Thornton**. After driving hordes of rap heroes [illegible] with the porn-fueled super(Slow)my funk of Dr. Octagon (Bulk, 1996) and Sex Style (Funky Ass/Nu Groove Alliance, 1997), **Keith returns with a new identity, Dr. Dooom, and a new LP of unrivaled eccentricities:** *First Come First Served* (Funky Ass/Nu Groove Alliance, 650-877-7370). An entirely separate album from Keith's concurrent Ruffhouse Records release, *Black Elvis*, Dooom's piece is as amusingly self-indulgent a musical mess as we've caught Kool and his gang (namely, production foil Kutmaster Kurt) playing in yet. From the introductory "Who Killed Dr. Octagon" skit to the Pen & Pixel Graphics' ratburger-meets-forlorn-gorilla-resting-in-a-garbage-pile cover collage, *First Come* finds Keith remaining that same entertaining underground rap force, even when he's completely wack. (And let's face it, half of this stuff would be deemed unlistenable if anyone else was doing it.) How should you spell rap relief? D-O-O-O-M.

HEAVY ROTATION:

[illegible] —***Laid in Full*** **(Blackberry, 818-881-3565)**

[illegible] —***My Vinyl Weighs a Ton*** **(Stones Throw, 415-441-5051)**

[illegible] —**"Around the Globe" (Sole Music, 011 44 141 401 4640)**

[illegible] —***Buried Alive*** **(Molemen, 773-212-2919)**

[illegible] —***Mister Cee Presents Brooknam's Finest Freestyles*** **(Tape Kingz, 718-482-3387)**

DIONNE WARWICK
'THE DEFINITIVE COLLECTION' ARISTA


PHIL LOFTUS/LONDON FEATURES

As I approach middle age, I am desperate to find some good things about getting old. Here's one: My childhood memories include sitting in the backseat of the family Dodge and singing along to Dionne Warwick's 1966 Top 10 hit "Message to Michael." That the song's lyrics (all hail Hal David) were obtuse and oblique didn't matter. That its melody structure (praises due Burt Bacharach) was challenging and circuitous, no problem. The combination of those words, that tune, and Warwick's smoky, direct, and decidedly *non*juvenile voice registered and resonated and helped form my musical vocabulary. It goes without saying, but for the sake of this review it must be repeated: The union of Bacharach, David, and Warwick ranks as one of the most productive (11 Top 10 singles) and artistically satisfying collaborations in pop history. Nine of their hits—stuff like "Do You Know the Way to San Jose" (1968), "Walk On By" (1964), and the moody masterpiece "Anyone Who Had a Heart" (1963)—make up the better bulk of this very complete, very welcome collection. And it's no insult to either the two gentlemen or to Madame Warwick to say that while they've all enjoyed success after their string of hits subsided in the early '70s, nothing that they did apart was as regal and gorgeous as what they created in unison.

Amy Linden

VARIOUS ARTISTS
'SOUNDBOMBING II' RAWKUS



FRANK KHALFOUN

REVOLUTIONS REVOLUTIONS

Three years ago, the brains behind Rawkus devised a plan to nurture a crop of MCs just starting to blossom in New York City's underground hip hop scene. And now that the climate of hip hop is slowly beginning to shift away from the Puff-driven "ice" age, Rawkus prepares to reap the benefits of their harvest with the release of *Soundbombing II*. Unlike its predecessor, and especially the languid *Lyricist Lounge Vol. 1* (Rawkus, 1998), *SBII* illustrates the evolution of Rawkus's MCs from raw and unpolished to solid, skilled artists poised to give chart-topping rappers a serious run for their money.

This newfound confidence and maturity is typified by the High & Mighty's "B-Boy Document 99" as well as Pharoahe Monch and Shabaam Sahdeeq's slamming collaboration, "WWIII." Both cuts bang with the up-tempo, high-octane power of Black Star's 1998 "Definition," the label's biggest hit so far. Even slower tracks, like Eminem's understated "Any Man" and the soulful title track by Dilated Peoples & Tash, maintain a high level of intensity.

Rawkus has weathered the storm of R&B–infused, radio-friendly hip hop that has dominated for so long, and now the sun shines on more rugged styles. So pump up *Soundbombing II* and bask in the glow.

Noah Callahan-Bever

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20 QUESTIONS



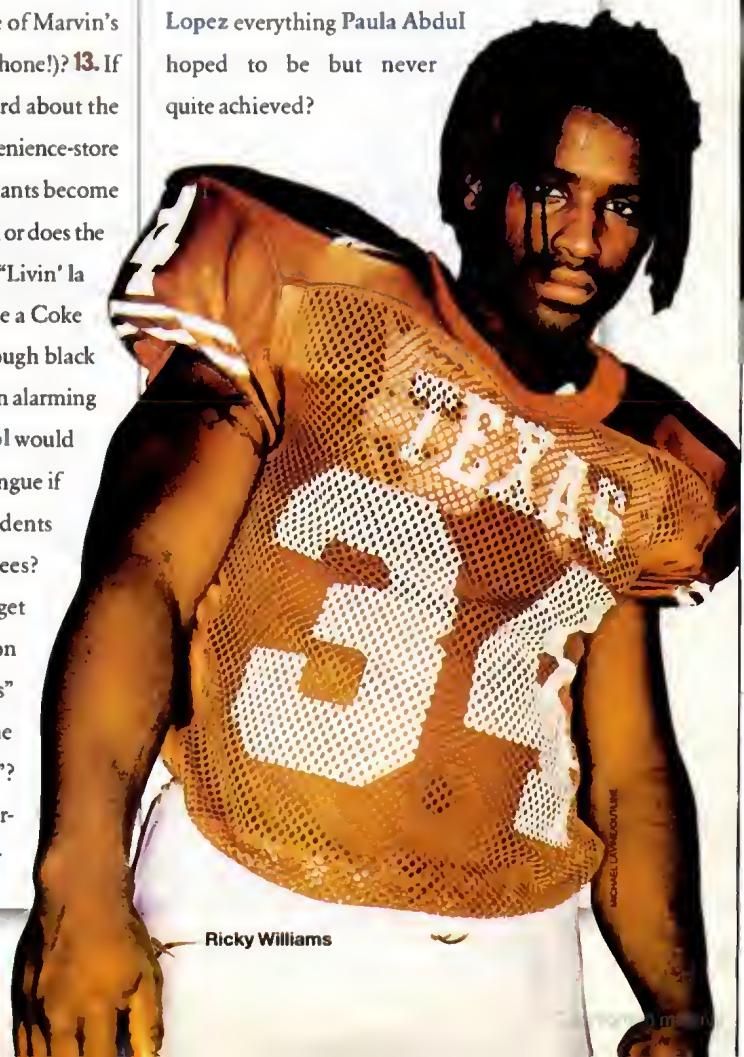
1. For the ladies: Doesn't Chanté Moore's blazing single "Chanté's Got a Man" make you feel all *warm* inside? 2. And for the fellas: Doesn't Chanté's song make you *think*?

3. Now that Viacom has bought The Box Music Network, is there a chance that the company that owns MTV might run a nationally available channel where viewers can actually watch videos again? **4.** Speaking of which, will MTV viewers be able to tear themselves away from the ever-fascinating developments of *The Real World* and *Road Rules* to even tune in? **5.** Why, when they realized track star Marion Jones is unbeatable, did other world-class female athletes drop out of 100- and 200-meter races? **6.** And d'ya think if she had any real competition Jones would have broken Flo Jo's world records by now? **7.** What future gazillionaire is finally gonna invent the Dick Tracy–style watch/cellular phone? **8.** If all this talk about an MP3 revolution is true, then can we expect to see hip hop heads walking around with laptops on their shoulders instead of boom boxes? **9.** With songs like "No, No, No" and their new "Bills, Bills, Bills," should we assume that the members of Destiny's Child stutter? **10.** It's likely that football player Ricky Williams will be an all-time-great running back like Jim Brown, but if things don't pan out for him in the NFL, will his agent, Master P, resort to casting him in No Limit films? **11.** Isn't it time for most men to become vegetarians so they can stop agonizing over chickenheads and pigeons? **12.** How lame is Motown's Marvin Gaye tribute album, *Marvin Is 60* (a warning to any other new-jack vocalists considering covering one of Marvin's classics: do not touch microphone!)? **13.** If all the scary things we've heard about the Y2K bug come true, will convenience-store owners and gas-station attendants become the new ballers? **14.** Is it just us, or does the video for Ricky Martin's "Livin' la Vida Loca" kinda look like a Coke commercial? **15.** Even though black children shoot each other at an alarming rate, do you think gun control would be on the tip of everyone's tongue if all those suburban white students hadn't gone on killing sprees? **16.** Ya think TLC had to get Michael Jackson's permission before filming their "No Scrubs" video on what looks like the same set he used for "Scream"? **17.** And with all the hype surrounding Bad Boy newcomer and Biggie sound-alike Shyne, can we admit that we haven't finished mourning the loss of one of hip hop's greatest MCs? **18.** Aren't all these head-banging rock-rap outfits (Korn, Limp Bizkit, Kid Rock) totally hanging off of Faith No More's sadly worn-out jockstrap? **19.** How could David Lynch—the man who gave us 1990's sexy *Wild at Heart* and TV's risqué *Twin Peaks*—deliver *The Straight Story*, a soon-to-be-released *G-rated* film (which happened to receive a standing ovation at the Cannes Film Festival)? **20.** Isn't Jennifer Lopez everything Paula Abdul hoped to be but never quite achieved?

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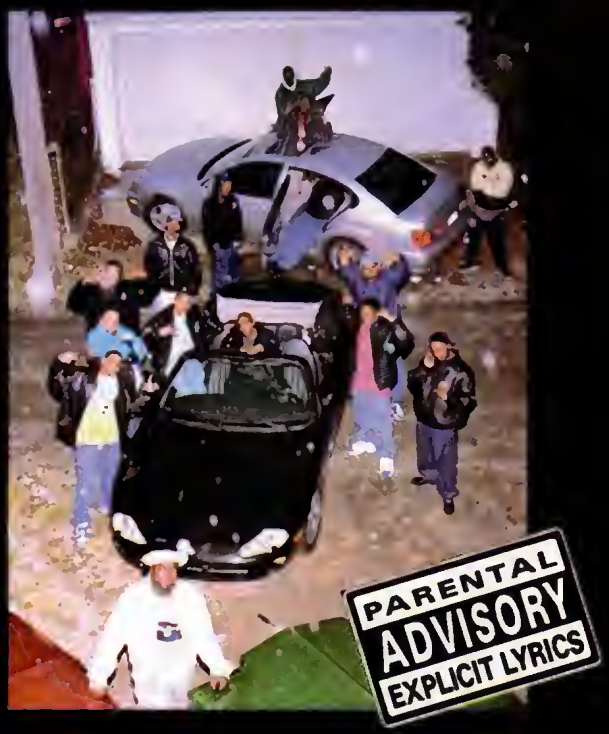
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THE DETAILS

VIBEFashion: "Cool Like That"

page 134:
Vintage black Asian print smoking jacket; gray cotton tank top $22 by **Tommy Hilfiger** available at Macy's, Bloomingdales, and Dillards stores nationwide; cargo jeans $68 by **Tommy Jeans** available at department stores nationwide; diamond watch by **Cartier.**

page 135:
Denim string bikini $120 by **Phat Farm** available at Phat Farm, N.Y.C. and South Beach, Miami; diamond and gold jewelry by **Fred Leighton,** N.Y.C.

page 136:
Denim western shirt $38 by **Levi's** (for more information, please call 800-USA-LEVI or go to *www.levi.com*); diamond pendant and stud earring, Slick Rick's own.

page 137:
Women's pocketed stretch denim shirt with metal buttons $34 by **Levi's** (for more information, please call 800-USA-LEVI or go to *www.levi.com*); stretch denim short-shorts $62 by **Diesel Style Lab** available at select Diesel stores nationwide (or for more information, please go to *www.diesel.com* or *www.dieselstylelab.com*); shoes by **Calvin Klein**; diamond cross and diamond studded chain, both by **Fred Leighton,** N.Y.C.

page 138:
Stretch denim string bikini $82 by **Polo Sport by Ralph Lauren** available at select Macy's, Neiman Marcus, Saks Fifth Avenue, and Dayton Hudson stores; chambray oxford sheets $54 and pillowcases $44, all by **Ralph Lauren Home Collection** (for more information, please call 212-642-8700); shoes by **Sergio Rossi**; diamond cross necklace and bracelet, both by **Fred Leighton,** N.Y.C.

page 139:
Black rose embroidered kimono coat, property of **Dolce & Gabbana Vintage**; silver sequin cummerbund $115 and flat-front jeans with gray nylon panels $380, both by **D&G Dolce & Gabbana** available at D&G New York Boutique-Soho and D&G Los Angeles Boutique-Sunset Plaza; socks by **Champion**; slides by **Fila**; diamond ring by **H. Stern.**

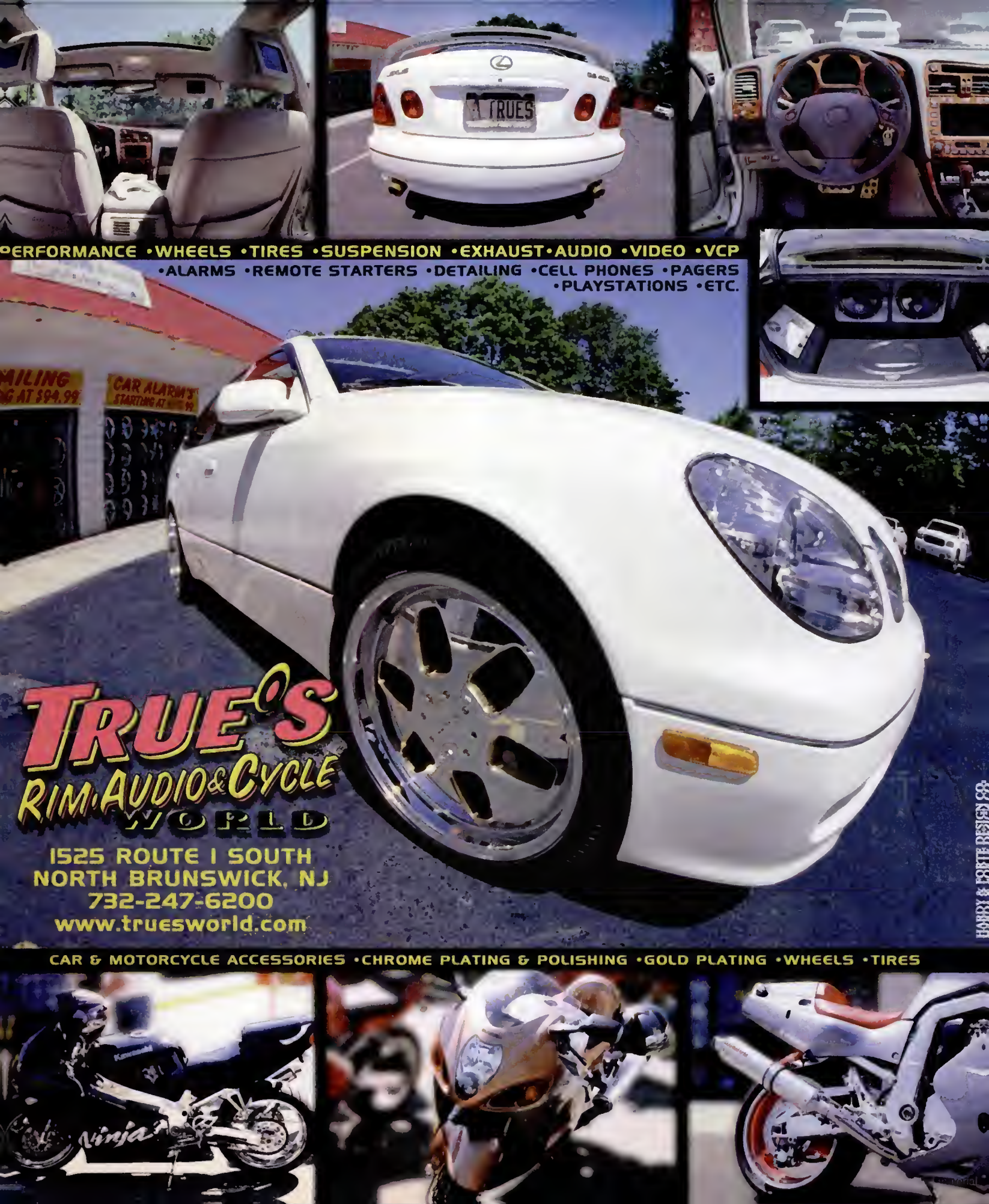
page 140:
Cotton and Lycra denim tube dress with lace trim $140 by **Phat Farm** available at Phat Farm, N.Y.C. and South Beach, Miami; shoes by **Patrick Cox**; diamond necklace, bracelet, and ring by **Fred Leighton,** N.Y.C.

page 141:
Cream vintage denim classic jacket with front seams $215 and black silk tank top $140, both by **Helmut Lang** (for more information, please go to *www.helmutlang.com*); platinum and diamond chain with cross, property of Kadi Agüeros.

page 142:
Gray Rugged Raw vest $78 and Kani football jersey $69, both by **Karl Kani** available at Dr. Jay's, Jimmy Jazz, The Lark, Breyer's, Macy's, Mr. Raggs, The Buckle, and Casual Male stores nationwide; diamond and platinum **Rolex** watch, bracelet, necklace with cross, and stud earring, all Kani's own.

page 143:
Silk georgette pink organza kimono $1,815 by **Jean Paul Gaultier**; denim bikini bottom $18 by **GUESS?** available at GUESS? retail stores, Dillards and Carsons stores nationwide; denim boots by **D&G Dolce & Gabbana**; silver and diamond choker and diamond stud earrings, both by **H. Stern**; denim chair by **Tommy Jeans.**

(continued on page 188)


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THE DETAILS

(continued from page 186)

VIBEStyle: "Daddy's Baby"

page 144:
Red Rugged Raw denim jeans $72 and jacket $88, and gray T-shirt $24, all by **Karl Kani** available at Macy's, Dr. Jay, Jimmy Jazz, Mr. Raggs, The Lark (for more information, please call 212-382-3900 or please go to *www.karlkani.com*); boots by **Timberland**; black hat by **EPMD**; Kids Red Rugged Raw denim jeans and jacket, and white T-shirt, all by **Karl Kani**; sneakers by **Nike**.

page 146:
Men's denim utility jeans $76 and jacket $88 by **Phat Farm** available at Phat Farm, N.Y.C. and South Beach, Miami; boots by **Timberland**. Kids' denim jeans $50 and jacket $56 by **Phat Farm** available at Phat Farm, N.Y.C. and South Beach, Miami; yellow cotton T-shirt with horizontal stripes $16 by **GUESS?**; boots by **Timberland**.

Gear: "Sneak Peek"

page 148:
Clockwise from top right: 1) Air Sunder Max $95 by **Nike** (for more information, please call 800-344-NIKE); 2) Air Flightposite $ 160 by **Nike** (for more information, please call 800-344-NIKE); 3) Cell Lhotse $80 by **Puma** (for more information, please call 800-662-PUMA); 4) Ancerus TR $65 by **Fila** (for more information, please call 800-PRO-FILA); 5) ECO Lo $80 by **Converse** (for more information, please call 800-428-2267); 6) Equipment Gazelle $100 by **Adidas** (for more information, please call 800-448-1796).
"Caller ID": From left to right: 1) Nylon cell-phone case with neck strap $12 by **Triple 5 Soul** available at Triple 5 Soul, 290 Lafayette St., N.Y.C. (for more information, please call 212-431-2404 or go to *www.triple5soul.com*); 2) Full-grain cowhide leather cell-phone case $25 by **Kenneth Cole** available at select Kenneth Cole stores, Travel 2000, and DNS Luggage (for more information, please call 800-KENCOLE or go to *www.kennethcole.com*); 3) Leather StarTac cell-phone case $68 by **Coach** available at Coach stores nationwide (for more information, please call 800-262-2411); 4) Brown nylon cell-phone case $104 by **Prada** available at Prada, Beverly Hills and Chicago; 5) Leather clip-on belt cell-phone case $25 by **Perry Ellis** available at Macy's stores nationwide (for more information, please call 800-457-7782).

VIBEFace: "Natural Woman"

page 150:
Turquoise and green silk camisole with jeweled closure $225 by **Emporio Armani** available at all Emporio Armani stores nationwide (for more information, please call 877-7-EMPORIO); bracelets by **Baby Phat**.

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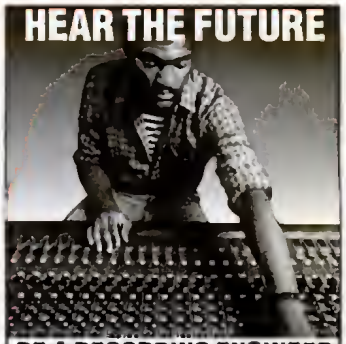
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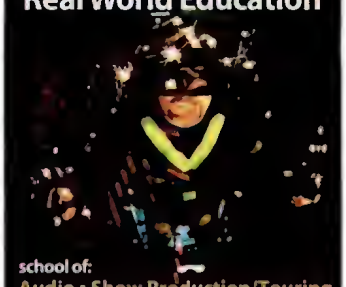
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Dr. Johnny Fever and Venus Flytrap



The misconception is that the show was about Loni Anderson, that America tuned in weekly to watch the platinum pinup's ever-et-ettention anetomy jiggle across the TV screen. In actuality, though, *WKRP in Cincinnati*, which ran on CBS from 1978 to 1982, was e televangelistic half hour devoted to nothing less than saving the soul of rock 'n' roll. Preaching the gospel? Two of the grooviest DJs ever to grace the airwaves. Affable schoolteacher–turned–mellow funk disciple Gordon Sims, a.k.a. Venus Flytrap (Tim Reid), and the welking embodiment of a 1960s hangover, Johnny Caravella, a.k.a. Dr. Johnny Fever (Howard Hesseman), a self-described "guy who doesn't quite know what's going on around him. . .and likes it that way."

No matter how desperately their station manager begged for some Top 40 compromise, these messiahs of musical truth refused to play the limp hits of the dey. Decked out in velour splendor, eccessorized with gongs, cendles, and a voice creemier than Barry White on laudanum, Flytrap worked the night shift, serving up the taster's choice of deep soul and rhythm end blues. Fever, tinted shades hiding his bloodshot eyes, held the morning slot, spinning only the stone-bone classics. "It's 10:15 a.m.," he'd intone to his listeners, leaning back in his chair while cueing up the Stones' "Shettered," "for those who still care about time."

And time hasn't passed *WKRP* by. In fect, on syndicated reruns, the sitcom seems downright prescient. As Flytrap and Fever spun timeless gems from Earth, Wind & Fire, Pink Floyd, and the Commodores, the station battled a pre–C. Dolores Tucker (and pre–Tipper Gore) censorship group and warned of the evils of canned, computer-programmed formats.

Perheps most significantly, in its nonchalant handling of the DJs' friendship, *WKRP* offered a bleary post-Watergete audience an image completely missing from eny other sitcom of the time. Unlike those offered on *The Jeffersons* or *Diff'rent Strokes*, the relationship shared by the black Flytrap and the white Fever was not antagonistic, paternelistic, or imbecilic. In an age when the pinnacle of positive race relations was the bland offensiveness of Tootie and the gang on *The Facts of Life*, these guys were simply depicted as two good friends with e sense of humor about themselves. A novel concept, still.

Jennifer Silverman

CBS PHOTO ARCHIVE



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